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By William Wetmore Story

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FIAMMETTA: A Summer Idyl.

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EXCURSIONS IN ART AND LETTERS.

HE AND SHE; or, A Poet's Portfolio.

A POET'S PORTFOLIO: LATER READINGS.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
Boston and New York

POEMS

BY

WILLIAM WETMORE STORY

VOL. I.

PARCHMENTS AND PORTRAITS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE.

In preparing this collection of poems it has been thought advisable to rearrange them and classify them in groups according to the character of their subjects. The titles of the volumes in which many of them have appeared have therefore been rejected as inappropriate, and new ones adopted.

The two volumes contain nearly all the poems published under the titles of "Graffiti D'Italia" (which is now out of print) and "He and She; or, a Poet's Portfolio;" a selection from a previous volume printed in 1856; a considerable number of waifs and estrays, which have since appeared in various magazines, and some which are new or have never before been printed.

The poem with which the collection begins, entitled "A Roman Lawyer in Jerusalem," has been very considerably enlarged by new views of the facts, and the evidence in the case of Judas, which, it is believed, will be found greatly to strengthen the argument.

W. W. STORY.

Palazzo Barberini,
Rome, *June*, 1885.

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

WHERE am I? What am I about? you ask,
And scold me well that all this summer long
I have not written. Let me make amends
And cry, Peccavi! (if that makes amends,)
Acknowledge all my sins, and, chief of them,
Pure laziness, for which full well you know
I have so strong a talent that almost
It might be called a genius. All these days
I have done nothing — nothing more at least
Than trees and grass and weeds, that simply bask
In the warm sunshine, drink the evening's dew,
And grow and feed upon the air, unplagued
By any thought of work, that fatal gift
The Devil forced on man in Paradise.

Shame! you will cry, to whom pure laziness
Is half a sin, and work the gift of God.
And yet, to lie full length upon the grass
And let the soul and sense take in the sky
While the thoughts wander, drifting here and there
Aimless as thistle downs, is what you need;

Fallow, dear Frank, long, lazy, fallow times
The mind must have, even as the richest soil,
Else harvest shows at last a meagre crop.

But to cease preaching, which I know you hate,
And so do I. Now let me answer you:
Where am I? Far away from busy towns,
From clack of work, and eager, senseless talk,
And noise, and what men call Society —
Deep in the Apennines, in a convent lone
Perched on a high and breezy mountain shelf;
A silent, serious, solitary place,
Where lazy peace and meditation live,
And careless let the worrying world go by.

Behind it stretches up a noble grove,
Where heavy-foliaged chestnuts, rich in shade,
Spread their broad-fingered hands of dark, cool green;
And spiny burrs, that soon will drop and burst
And in their white cells show their ambered fruit.
Here many a day, stretched upon some green knoll,
Resting my head upon their tortuous roots,
I gaze upon the landscape far below,
Or watch the busy life of hurrying ants,
Or listen to the song of wandering birds,
Idle as I am, with no task to do,
Or upward gaze into the world of leaves

Fretted against the clear blue sky above,
Lulled by the infinite hum of insect life
That swarms and wheels and quivers in the sun.
A noble life indeed! I hear you sneer.
Well, each must live his life. You yours, I mine;
You noise, toil, wrestling fierce with life delight,
Me self surrender unto nature's moods,
The silences in which the spirit grows,

But I forget, — I 'll preach no more. Besides,
You 'll never understand. Now to go on
With my description of this place. Beyond,
Still further back, a forest of dark pines
Sloping its jagged spears climbs serried up
And crowns with feathered edge the mountain's crest;
And here, upon a carpet of soft brown
When the whim takes me I for miles can walk.
'T is my cathedral, through whose lofty aisles
There steals an ever whispering sigh of prayer.

These shelter the old convent from the north
When in the winter Boreas storms at it,
And raging comes with both hands full of hail,
Blowing his trumpets. But 't is summer now,
And they are peaceful, fragrant solitudes.

Now southward turn your eyes, and look below.
There sleeps a vast fair valley, veiled in haze,

Through which a silvery river winds its way
And flashes in the sunshine. Here and there
Are little villages and castled heights
And columns faint of upward rising smoke,
All noiseless as a picture where the world,
Toil as it may, from here looks calm and still.
At times a distant contadina's song,
The lowing of far herds, the bleat of sheep,
The bark of dogs, comes softened up to us:
Else, all is silent. O'er the valley's verge,
Far-off, the mountains rise against the sky,
With purple shadows and stray gleams of sun,
Quivering with opal tints and shifting lights,
Like the pearl lining of an ocean shell,
Or the quick hues that haunt the dove's full neck, —
A valley dim and beautiful and faint
As the ideal dream of Rasselas!

We are too high for vineyards, but below,
Mingling among the flattened olives' tops
That evenly deploy up many a slope,
Trained upon canes they corrugate the ground,
Or swing from tree to tree their rich festoons
And fill their lucent skins with liquid sun.
One vineyard on the right, a half-mile down,
This convent owns, — for how all winter long
Would our monks live without their own good wine?
Trust them for that, they know when wine is good!

And trust them too to choose the best of sites
For air, health, light, to found their convent on.

Near by, a village hangs upon a cliff,
Gray as the cliff itself; and from afar
Seems like a cluster of quaint natural rocks
Shoveled at random down the mountain side.
Above, a ruined castle domineers,
Where once great lords and ladies lived and laughed,
And fought, loved, danced, long centuries ago,
That are but dust now — and their crumbling courts
Where once glad voices rang and pageants passed,
Are dreary lairs of vermin and of filth
Haunted by hooting owls and silent ghosts.

The convent in itself is grim and gray,
With solid walls that might resist a siege;
Its corners buttressed; all its windows small
Save one, high arched, to give the chapel light.
This chapel seen within is high, white, chill;
Each side the altar a cadaverous saint,
And over it, behind the candlesticks,
A black madonna wearing on her breast
A bleeding heart with circling daggers stabbed.
But what of all is mostly prized is kept
Behind the altar in a gilded chest:
A ghastly mummy of its special saint,

Fearful to look upon, but, I am told,
Endowed with mighty and miraculous powers.

There are some twenty monks here, that is all;
Each with his cold bare cell that opens out
From a long, whitewashed, sounding corridor,
Each with its crucifix and colored print.

We all dine in the old refectory, —
A spacious room, — and while we take our food
A brother, mounted in a pulpit thrust
From out the wall, monotonously reads
The life of some old saint, or homily.
The kitchen is superb, vaulted above,
While in the centre, raised above the floor,
A sort of quaint and columned temple stands,
Where one a whole ox easily could roast.

How came I here? you 'll ask — no matter how —
I *am* here. I had certain ways and means,
That is my secret, which I shall not tell,

The monks are friendly. All of them, of course,
Narrow of mind and fixed like flints in chalk
In matters of religion, doctrine, faith
(Almost in fact as obstinate as you).
But all are kindly, some of them, indeed,
Gay, jolly, joking; some a little grim;

Some, but a very few, and first of all
The abbot, studious, learned in their way,
Though curiously bounded in their thoughts.

Well! here I stay with them, and the days pass—
So smoothly pass, I almost think at times
I will become a monk, and leave the world
To rattle on without me as it will.
(Oh! I can hear you say "Just like you too.")
We have a sunny garden cloistered round,
Where it is pleasant to pace to and fro
Beneath the arches, pondering many things.
Fixed in its centre is a great round well
O'erarched with iron ribs, whose jangling chains
Let down its copper buckets to a vast
Deep cistern, where a cold and constant stream,
Drawn from a wild gorge in the mountain side,
With hollow, soothing gurgle ever pours.
Around it spreads the garden, more for use
Than beauty planted, yet it has its charm.
Here are no rare exotics, all the flowers
Are common flowers that own a homely name.
Sunny nasturtiums, glowing marigolds,
Clustered sweet-williams, plots of pansies sweet,
Nodding their faces old in gay mob-caps;
Cockscombs with flaming crests, and spicy pinks,
Larkspurs with adder-tongues, and roses wild
That blossom by the wall, where rooted clings
A tortuous fig-tree bulging into fruit,

Or a chance caper shoots its plumy flowers.
Here, too, are all the herbs : sweet marjoram,
Sweet basil, thyme, mint, sage, and slender spires
Of fragrant lavender, and malva pale ;
In the square, central plots, round cabbages
Squat on the ground, and artichokes sprawl out,
And rank potatoes rear their poison blooms,
And flower-de-luces, valued by the monks
Not for their splendid flowers, but for their roots.
Here, too, tall rows of climbing beans and peas
Trail from high poles, and hang their swelling pods,
And down the central walk, their broad, round disks
Fringed with gold leaves, are stately sunflowers ranged.

Before the cloisters stand at intervals
Great vases filled with orange-trees, that show
Through dark green polished leaves their golden fruit,
And with their blossoms fill the fragrant air.

Here the monks wander idly up and down,
Each with his breviary in his hand,
Well-thumbed and greasy, its long ribbon mark
With pendant medals hanging from its leaves, —
Now reading and now gazing blankly round
With wandering eyes, and ever moving lips,

And crossing of the breast at intervals,
As they recite their daily offices.
Great heavens! I wish at times I could believe
With blind, dull faith like theirs, and cease to think.
For, after all, what do we know at last
With all our thinking? And what matters it
If two and two make four, or five, or six?
Life's sphinx-like riddle all have failed to guess,
Alike the wisest sage and veriest fool.

When the sun burns too hotly, I retreat
To the old library, where all is still, —
Nay, almost dead, — its shelves piled up with books
Gathered so many a century ago,
So old, so void of life, they almost seem
Coffins of perished thought, and this lone room
The cemetery where they lie at rest.

Here shimmers in through dimmed and dusty panes
A veiled and shadowy light; the silent air
Is musty with the smell of folios huge,
Quartos and parchments old and rotting wood;
So still, so strangely still, is all the place,
One scarce would start to see some peaceful ghost
Come stealing softly in and fade away.
One constant occupant alone there is

Besides the ghosts, who from these folios here
Finds nourishment, — the ever-boring worm.

Here I have sat how many a quiet hour!
Communing with the dead, whose hoarded thoughts
And idle dreams and fancies, swift and fine,
Have long outlived the brains that nourished them,
And, as it were, across the chasm obscure
That yawns between us, stretched my spirit forth
To wander with them through far paths of thought
And silent ways of vanished centuries.
These dead books make no noise, and argue not,
As once their authors did, perchance, in life,
And if they weary you, you turn from them
Without excuse, knowing you wound them not.

Here you may read, lay down your book, and dream,
Sleep if you will, wake, and then doze again,
No one objects, and no one interrupts.
Mostly the room is empty, though at times
A sandaled monk will slowly shuffle in,
At times, the rector from the village near
Will enter, lift his black tricornered hat,
Salute me, gravely take his pinch of snuff,
Wipe with his checkered handkerchief his nose,
Then roll it up and fold it to a square,

And this accomplished seat himself to read.
The droning fly that drums against the pane
Makes silence almost silenter. Poor fool!
Why does he long for air, for light, for heaven?
Why do I ask? Are we not all the same?
Who is content in life's most spacious room,
Nor beats the window opening to the sky?
And beats it like the foolish fly, in vain.

The good old abbot, studious in his way,
Has taken a fancy to me, as I think,
And many a talk we have of men, books, things,
The prospects of the harvest and the wine,
The weather, Dante, the Atlantic vast,
That frightens him in thought, the Pope, the king,
Colombo, Vashintoni, Nuova Yorck.

Here, as I sat one pleasant summer day
When the soft air was fragrant with the breath
Of the warm earth, and all its happy flowers
That through the casement wafted now and then
A whiff that made me lay aside my book
And set me dreaming of the days of yore,
When you and I were young, and life was new,
The old abbot entered and broke up my dream,
Offered his usual pinch of snuff, and said,
"I see these old books interest you much,
But what perhaps may interest you more
Are our old manuscripts, and palimpsests,

And parchments of the past, that ages gone
Our fathers stored away. We ought, in truth,
To arrange and catalogue them, for who knows
What they may be; but the time lacks, time lacks,
Life is so short. Well, well! but with God's aid
Later perhaps we may, — who knows, who knows?

"Here, look! They 're in this closet. If you like,
Search into them and see what you can find.
Once we could boast a rare collection here, —
Ages ago, — but in the unlearned times
Our brothers used to cut these parchments up
As covers for their sermons, and from some
Scraped as they could the ancient writing off
(For parchment then was dear) to write upon.
Sometimes I fear — or so 't is said — they spoiled
Old manuscripts for which the world would pay
Who knows how much? Well, well! what would you have?
We are all mortal men, all make mistakes;
So patience, patience! Some may still be left, —
And then our brothers meant to do no wrong,
So we must pardon them. What would you have?
Who knows? their sermons may have saved a soul,
And one soul saved is worth a world of books."

So saying, from his desk he took a key,
Opened the closet door, and smiling said,
"What a confusion! Really, on my word,
We must find time to put some order here,
This is disgraceful! (Here he snuffed again.)
Brother Anselmo must be told of this,
I 'll speak to him to-day — this is too bad!
But there 's the bell, so I must leave you now.
You will not come to prayers with us? ah,
well!
There is the key, take it and rummage there,
And close and lock the closet when you 've
done."

So saying, he left me. 'T was as he had said,
A dire confusion, parchments sewn, unsewn,
Some tied together carelessly, some loose,
Tumbled and torn, and scattered here and there,
All yellow, grim, defiled, and deep in dust.

At first I scarcely liked to take them up,
So soiled they were, but putting in my hand
I pulled one bundle out and beat it well
To free it from its worms, and dust, and filth,
Then took it to my table, cut the cord,
And set myself to see what I had found.

'T was an odd medley of old manuscripts,
Quite unrelated, in no order ranged
Of author, age, or subject. Some of these

Were palimpsests (so called) of Pagan times,
That is, old parchments, whence the ancient text
Had been effaced so as to serve again
For other writings of a later date.
Yet, spite of all, the shadowy early texts
Still faintly showed, the ink having sunk so deep
It could not utterly be washed away.
The later texts were mostly homilies,
Or monkish sermons void of interest,
But black and clear as all the first were dim;
Still, when the new were writ between the lines
Of the old texts, even these with patient care
One could at times decipher; even at times
A practiced eye could read them easily.

Besides these palimpsests were manuscripts
Of yellowed paper, written out first hand, —
More modern far, but yet some centuries old.
The greater part were rubbish, such as bills,
Convent accounts, receipts, and catalogues,
With lame and pompous verses interspersed,
Writ in dog-Latin, for the festal day
Or funeral day of some old abbot dead.
As weak in grammar as profuse in praise,
Claiming that all the virtues known to man
Had, heaven descended, come to crown his life.

Here, too, were letters written as 't would seem
By learned men, who to this convent's calm,
Tired of the world and all its bustling ways,

Had come to rest awhile their weary heads,
Or far from noise to ponder, study, write.
Some of their manuscripts, forgotten, lost,
Or thrown away perhaps, being first drafts
(Or so, at least, the erasures seemed to show),
Were left behind by them, and still preserved.
And these that eyes for centuries had not seen
I puzzled out, mostly of little worth,
Saving as glimpses into human hearts
And hopes and fears that time will never change.

Of these old palimpsests and manuscripts
But few I could decipher, and of these
I send you six to serve as specimens.
If they amuse you, I can send you more.

Ah, had I only had the luck to find
Some of those precious writings lost so long,
Sought for so long in vain for many an age:
The missing books of Tacitus; the songs
Of hapless Sappho; of Euripides,
Æschylus, Sophocles, one single act,
One single scene of their lost tragedies;
One poem wrecked upon the strand of Time
That stirred the heart and soul of ancient days;
One letter writ by Egypt's wondrous queen
To Antony at Rome, or Pericles
To fair Aspasia; or one careless sketch
By Zeuxis, Phidias, or Apelles drawn,
Or, what I covet even more than these,

Stern Agrippina's diary and life,
Writ by herself, recording all her thoughts,
Deeds, passions, — all the doings of old Rome,
Swarming around her, rife with scandals, crimes,
Joys, struggles, triumphs, — all the portraits sharp
Of men and women as they lived, talked, loved, —
Not as in History's limbo they appear,
Mere names and ghostlike shadows, but alive,
Fierce, restless, human, — what a book to find!

But no such luck was mine — ah, no indeed!
Yet, let me not complain; such happy luck
Hath never fallen yet on mortal man.
I should not dare to let the abbot know
What I did find, or even let him guess
What dangers in those parchments may be hid.
Even these I send would shock the good old man, —
Or some at least. How could he ever dream
His convent closet held such skeletons?

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

This extract from a letter of my friend
His brother sent me, with the manuscripts.
He had glanced through them hurriedly, he said,
Took little interest in them, wondered much
At such a waste of time, and made me free
To use them as I chose. Not being sure

Of my own judgment I have thought it best
To print them, as on trial, and invoke
The public verdict. I think well of them:
His brother thinks them worthless, — which is
right?

PARCHMENTS AND PALIMPSESTS.

A ROMAN LAWYER IN JERUSALEM.

FIRST CENTURY.

[*The Case of Judas.*]

MARCUS, abiding in Jerusalem,
Greeting to Caius, his best friend, in Rome!
Salve! these presents will be borne to you
By Lucius, who is wearied with this place,
Sated with travel, looks upon the East
As simply hateful — blazing, barren, bleak,
And longs again to find himself in Rome.
After the tumult of its streets, its trains
Of slaves and clients, and its villas cool
With marble porticoes beside the sea,
And friends and banquets, — more than all, its games, —
This life seems blank and flat. He pants to stand
In its vast circus all alive with heads
And quivering arms and floating robes, — the air
Thrilled by the roaring *fremitus* of men, —
The sunlit awning heaving overhead,
Swollen and strained against its corded veins,
And flapping out its hem with loud report, —
The wild beasts roaring from the pit below, —

The wilder crowd responding from above
With one long yell that sends the startled blood
With thrill and sudden flush into the cheeks, —
A hundred trumpets screaming, — the dull thump
Of horses galloping across the sand, —
The clang of scabbards, the sharp clash of steel, —
Live swords, that whirl a circle of gray fire, —
Brass helmets flashing 'neath their streaming hair, —
A universal tumult, — then a hush
Worse than the tumult — all eyes straining down
To the arena's pit — all lips set close —
All muscles strained, — and then that sudden yell,
Habet! — That 's Rome, says Lucius: so it is!
That is, 't is *his* Rome, — 't is not yours and mine.

And yet, great Jupiter, here at my side
He stands with face alive as if he saw
The games he thus describes, and says, "That 's life!
Life! life! my friend, and this is simply death!
Ah! for my Rome!" I jot his very words
Just as he utters them. I hate these games,
And Lucius knows it, yet he will go on,
And all against my will he stirs my blood;
So I suspend my letter for a while.

A walk has calmed me — I begin again —
Letting this last page, since it is written, stand.
Lucius is going; you will see him soon
In our great Forum, there with him will walk,
And hear him rail and rave against the East.
I stay behind, — for these bare silences,
These hills that in the sunset melt and burn,
This proud, stern people, these dead seas and lakes,
These sombre cedars, this intense still sky,
To me o'erwearied with Life's din and strain,
Are grateful as the solemn blank of night
After the fierce day's irritant excess;
Besides, a deep, absorbing interest
Detains me here, fills up my mind, and sways
My inmost thoughts, — has got as 't were a gripe
Upon my very life, as strange as new.
I scarcely know how well to speak of this,
Fearing your raillery at best, — at worst
Even your contempt; yet, spite of all, I speak.

First, do not deem me to have lost my head,
Sun-struck, as that man Paulus was at Rome.
No, I am sane as ever, and my pulse
Beats even, with no fever in my blood.
And yet I half incline to think his words,
Wild as they were, were not entirely wild.
Nay, shall I dare avow it? I half tend,
Here in this place, surrounded by these men, —

Despite the jeering natural at first,
And then the pressure of my life-long thought
Trained up against it, — to excuse his faith,
And half admit the Christus he thinks God
Was, at the least, a most mysterious man.
Bear with me if I now avow so much;
When next we meet I will expose my mind,
But now the subject I must scarcely touch.

How many a time, while sauntering up and down
The Forum's space, or pausing 'neath the shade
Of some grand temple, arch, or portico,
Have we discussed some knotty point of law,
Some curious case, whose contradicting facts
Looked Janus-faced to innocence and guilt.
I see you now arresting me, to note
With quiet fervor and uplifted hand
Some subtle view or fact by me o'erlooked,
And urging me, who always strain my point
(Being too much, I know, a partisan),
To pause, and press not to the issue so,
But more apart, with less impetuous zeal,
Survey as from an upper floor the facts.

I need you now to rein me in, too quick
To ride a whim beyond the term of Truth,
For here a case comes up to which in vain
I seek the clue: you could clear up my mind;
But you are absent — so I send these notes.

The case is of one Judas, Simon's son,
Iscariot called — a Jew — and one of those
Who followed Christus, held by some a god,
But deemed by others to have preached and taught
A superstition vile, of which one point
Was worship of an ass; but this is false!
Judas, his follower, all the sect declare,
Bought by a bribe of thirty silver coins,
Basely betrayed his master unto death.
The question is, — Did Judas, doing this,
Act from base motives and commit a crime?
Or, all things taken carefully in view,
Can he be justified in what he did?

Here on the spot, surrounded by the men
Who acted in the drama, I have sought
To study out this strange and tragic case.
Many are dead, as Herod, Caiaphas,
And also Pilate, — a most worthy man,
Under whose rule, but all without his fault,
And, as I fancy, all against his will,
Christus was crucified. This I regret:
His words with me would have the greatest weight;
But Lysias still is living, an old man,
The chief of the Centurions, whose report
Is to be trusted, as he saw and heard,
Not once, but many a time and oft, this man.
His look and bearing, Lysias thus describes: —

"Tall, slender, not erect, a little bent;
Brows arched and dark; a high-ridged lofty
head;
Thin temples, veined and delicate; large eyes,
Sad, very serious, seeming as it were
To look beyond you, and whene'er he spoke
Illumined by an inner lamping light, —
At times, too, gleaming with a strange wild fire
When taunted by the rabble in the streets;
A Jewish face, complexion pale but dark;
Thin, high-cut nostrils, quivering constantly;
Long nose, full lips, hands tapering, full of veins;
His movements nervous: as he walked he seemed
Scarcely to heed the persons whom he passed,
And for the most part gazed upon the ground;
Or lifting up his eyes, seemed as it were
To look far through you to some world beyond.

"As for his followers, I knew them all —
A strange, mad set, and full of fancies wild —
John, Peter, James — and Judas, best of all —
All seemed to me good men without offense, —
A little crazed, — but who is wholly sane?
They went about and cured the sick and halt,
And gave away their money to the poor,
And all their talk was charity and peace.
If Christus thought and said he was a god,
'T was harmless madness, not deserving death.
What most aroused the wealthy Rabbis' rage
Was that he set the poor against the rich,

And cried that rich men all would go to hell,
And, worst of all, roundly denounced the priests,
With all their rich phylacteries and robes, —
Said they were hypocrites who made long prayers,
And robbed poor widows and devoured their means,
And were at best but whited sepulchres:
And this it was that brought him to the Cross.

"Those who went with him and believed in him
Were mostly dull, uneducated men,
Simple and honest, dazed by what he did,
And misconceiving every word he said.
He led them with him in a spell-bound awe,
And all his cures they called miraculous.
They followed him like sheep where'er he went,
With feelings mixed of wonder, fear, and love.
Yes! I suppose they loved him, though they fled
Stricken with fear when we arrested him."

"What! all — all fled?" I asked. "Did none remain?"

"Not one," he said, "all left him to his fate.
Not one dared own he was a follower, —
Not Peter surely, he denied him thrice;
No one gave witness for him of them all.
Stop! When I say not one of them, I mean
No one but Judas, — Judas, whom they call

The traitor, — who betrayed him to his death.
He rushed into the council-hall and cried,
''T is I have sinned — Christus is innocent.'"

And here I come to what of all I 've heard
Most touched me, — I for this my letter write.
Paulus, you know, had only for this man,
This Judas, words of scorn and bitter hate.
Mark now the different view that Lysias took!
When, urged by me, his story thus he told: —

"Some say that Judas was a base, vile man,
Who sold his master for the meanest bribe;
Others again insist he was most right,
Giving to justice one who merely sought
To overthrow the Church, subvert the law,
And on its ruins build himself a throne.
I, knowing Judas — and none better knew —
I, caring nought for Christus more than him,
But hating lies, the simple truth will tell.
No man can say I ever told a lie;
I am too old now to begin. Besides,
The truth is truth, and let the truth be told.
Judas, I say, alone of all the men
Who followed Christus, thought that he was God.
Some feared him for his power of miracles;
Some were attracted by a sort of spell;
Some followed him to hear his sweet, clear voice,
And gentle speaking, hearing with their ears,
And knowing not the sense of what he said;

But one alone believed he was the Lord,
The true Messiah of the Jews. That one
Was Judas, — he alone of all the crowd.

"He to betray his master for a bribe!
He last of all. I say this friend of mine
Was brave when all the rest were cowards there.

"His was a noble nature: frank and bold,
Almost to rashness bold, yet sensitive,
Who took his dreams for firm realities;
Who once believing, all in all believed;
Rushing at obstacles and scorning risk,
Ready to venture all to gain his end;
No compromise or subterfuge for him,
His act went from his thought straight to the butt.
Yet with this ardent and impatient mood
Was joined a visionary mind that took
Impressions quick and fine, yet deep as life.
Therefore it was that in this subtle soil
The master's words took root and grew and flowered.
He heard, and followed, and obeyed; his faith
Was serious, earnest, real — winged to fly;
He doubted not, like some who walked with him;
Desired no first place, as did James and John;
Denied him not with Peter: not to him
His master said, 'Away! thou 'rt an offense;
Get thee behind me, Satan!' — not to him,
'Am I so long with ye who know me not?'

Fixed as a rock, untempted by desires
To gain the post of honor when his Lord
Should come to rule — chosen from out the midst
Of sixscore men as his apostle — then
Again selected to the place of trust,
Unselfish, honest, he among them walked.

"That he was honest, and was so esteemed,
Is plain from this, — they chose him out of all
To bear the common purse, and take and pay.
John says he was a thief, because he grudged
The price that for some ointment once was paid,
And urged 't were better given to the poor.
But did not Christus ever for the poor
Lift up his voice,— 'Give all things to the poor;
Sell everything and give all to the poor!'
And Judas, who believed, not made believe,
Used his own words, and Christus, who excused
The gift because of love, rebuked him not.
I, for my part, see nothing wrong in this.
Did he alone of Christus' followers
Condemn this gift? ah, no! by all of them
It was condemned, all cried indignantly
'Why is this waste?' not Judas more than they.

"Thief! thief indeed! If Christus was a God
Or even a Prophet, or, far less, a man,
Endowed with common judgment, insight, mind,
He must have known and seen what Judas was,
With whom he lived in constant fellowship;

And yet he chose him out of all of them
To bear the purse and give alms to the poor! —
He chose a thief, and none remonstrated,
Not even John, for all he now may say."

"But why, if Judas was a man like this,
Frank, noble, honest," — here I interposed, —
"Why was it that he thus betrayed his Lord?"

"This question oft did I revolve," said he,
"When all the facts were fresh, and oft revolved
In later days, and with no change of mind;
And this is my solution of the case: —

"Daily he heard his master's voice proclaim,
'I am the Lord! the Father lives in me!
Who knoweth me knows the Eternal God!
He who believes in me shall never die!
No! he shall see me with my angels come
With power and glory here upon the earth
To judge the quick and dead! Among you here
Some shall not taste of death before I come
God's kingdom to establish on the earth!'

"What meant these words? They seethed in
Judas' soul.
'Here is my God — Messias, King of kings,
Christus, the Lord — the Saviour of us all.
How long shall he be taunted and reviled,
And threatened by this crawling scum of men?

Oh, who shall urge the coming of that day
When he in majesty shall clothe himself
And stand before the astounded world its King?
Long brooding over this inflamed his soul;
And, ever rash in schemes as wild in thought,
At last he said, 'No longer will I bear
This ignominy heaped upon my Lord.
No man hath power to harm the Almighty One.
Ay, let man's hand be lifted, then, at once,
Effulgent like the sun, swift like the sword,
The jagged lightning flashes from the cloud,
Shall he be manifest — the living God —
And prostrate all shall on the earth adore!' "

"This is a strange solution," here I cried.
"Find you a better, if you can," said he.
"I cannot. Taking all the facts in view,
Or rather the reports, the truth of which
I cannot vouch, — but, taking them as facts,
I see no other. Strange to you and me
Of course it seems, but not so strange to one
Like Judas with a mind ideal half,
Enthusiastic, visionary, quick
To set ablaze, and yet half positive,
Fixed, practical, and ever prone to force
Mere dreams into the world of acts and facts.

"Others might think the words that Christus used
Were vague and wild: to Judas they seemed
plain.

Christus was God, not man, and being such
Must of necessity desire the hour
When man should end, and God should be revealed.
Judas was sure he had divined this wish,
Sure that his own thought Christus had divined,
And sure as Christus said, the hour had come.

"This is, at least, the only key I know
That fits the wards of this mysterious case."

Here let me interrupt this narrative
With comments of my own, and words, acts, facts,
Unknown to Lysias, testified by those
Who knew, loved, followed Christus, and, 't would seem,
Thought him a sort of God. From their reports
I take the facts they state, the words they use,
Striving to find through this entangled maze,
The simple clue of truth, no more, no less.

"Divined his thought," says Lysias. Was his thought
So hidden that a sympathetic heart
Could not at once divine it? If to some,
Wanting the sense to apprehend, his words
Seemed riddles hard to guess, to me at least
The wonder seems that any could mistake,
So clearly, with such iterance, they were said.

"Divined his thought." What was there to divine?
What else could mean those sayings strange and strong,
So oft repeated? What for instance this?
"I to Jerusalem must go, and there
Be taken, suffer, and be slain, and then
I shall arise triumphant over all.
Then you shall see in glory and in power
The son with all his Father's angels come."
And then it was, when Peter, answering back,
Rebuked him saying, "Be it far from thee,
This shall not be unto thee," he, half vexed
To be thus thwarted in his wish, cried out,
"Get thee behind me, Satan, thou to me
Art an offense." And so again he said:
"I lay my life down, no man taketh it
Away from me. I lay it down myself,
As I have power to take it up again;
And I will lift up all the earth to me."
And yet again: "I go my way, but where
You cannot follow,"— and at this his friends
Whispered, "What means this? Will he kill himself?"

'T is plain at last this one thought haunted him.
He longed for sacrifice, as all such souls,
Exalted, fired with high ideal thoughts,
Long for their martyrdom and cannot rest
Till by their death they consecrate their faith.

Them the fire burns not, them the wild beasts' fangs
Are powerless to torment, — the torturing rack,
The red-hot pincers break and rend in vain.
The spirit overpowers and scorns the flesh,
And pain is but the promise of reward.

Weary of teaching where none understood,
Tired of life and all its mean mad strife,
Eager he longed to greet the end of all.
"I have a baptism and must be baptized
Thereunto, and am straitened till 't is done."
Thus cried he, and his words seem plain enough,
So plain indeed that some among them deemed
He meant to take his life. Some, to avert
His purpose, strove like Peter, and in vain.
And of the common crowd of followers
Many abandoned him as one half mad.

But not to press this further and repeat
His many other sayings strange and wild,
Let these suffice! You will perceive how strong
They bear upon the matter to explain
The sad mistake of Judas, — if indeed
He did mistake, — or show he but obeyed
The will of Christus and direct command.
You, who have seen how glad some victims go
To meet their death, — ay, greet and covet it, —
Will see that Christus, being, let us say,
Inspired, — all men with high and noble thoughts

Are what we call inspired, — a prophet too —
Almost a God — so deemed at least by some,
Even by himself, 't would seem, — lifted at least
Above the herd of ignorant wicked men
In all his hopes and aims, misunderstood
Even by his friends, pursued by enemies,
Should weary of the heavy task his God
Had laid on him and long to consecrate
By sacrifice his life, and end it all.

Upon his spirit, in his later years,
A change had come. The teaching sweet and calm,
The universal love for all mankind,
Which in his early years was all in all,
Had given way to other thoughts and hopes.
No more the simple teacher as of yore,
Now, though at times he said he was mere man,
At other times he claimed to be a God.
The son of God, Messiah of the Jews,
The coming one to whom all power was given
To judge the quick and dead, who, of himself,
In three days' space could hurl their temple down,
And build it up, — mere madness as it seemed
To those who heard and laughed and pitied him.
This overcast his spirit, and at times
His words were bitter (as when he denounced
The Pharisees and priests), at times his acts
(As when he drove from forth the Temple's gates
The changers, crying they had made God's house

A den of thieves). Through all these later days
A spirit ruled him different from the old.
Whether he thought, in truth, that he was God,
And Death, or what to others seemed the end,
Was but the door through which from human life
He to a life divine should pass, and man
So become God and back to earth return
Triumphant, glorious, with angelic hosts, —
Or whether Death he deemed would quail and crouch,
And powerless at his presence drop its sword
And justify his claim to all the world, —
Whatever were his thoughts, he longed to try
The sharp conclusion, once for all, and prove
He was Messiah, God, the King of all.

I hazard this. It may be so, at least
This way his words would clearly seem to point.
If so, then Judas may have shared his thoughts;
If not so, ample ground there surely was
For misconception without thought of wrong.

So much for this; what followed let us see.
The records are not clear, but still enough
To show the way to truth, for one at least
Trained as you are to balance evidence.

One thing is amply proved: that he alone,
When safe beyond the reach of enemies,
Ordained this journey to Jerusalem,

Alone decreed the time, place, circumstance,
Against his followers' wish when they should meet,
Why did he go, unless to brave his foes,
To court betrayal, and to seek his death?

But be this as it may, thither he went;
There in the house appointed met his friends;
There, knowing he was sought for by his foes,
Sat down with Judas and the rest to sup.
And as they supped, he said, "Among you here
Is one that shall betray me." At these words
Did all start up amazed, indignant, each
With horror struck, protesting, crying out.
Each questioning each? ah, no! each simply said,
"Lord is it I? Lord is it I?" Yes, all!
Ay! every one of them cried, "Is it I?"
And he: "The one who dippeth in his sop
With mine into the dish, he is the one
That shall betray me." Judas in the dish
Then dipped his sop — or Christus gave it him,
And said "Now go! and what thou hast to do
Do quickly;" and then Judas rose and went.
But ere he rose and left them Christus said,
"Now shall the Son of man be glorified!"
Strange words, that Judas well might think to mean
His master should be glorified through him.

Here let us pause and look these simple facts
Full in the face. Either the act itself

Which Judas was to do was infamous,
Or simply right and justified by all.
Setting aside all question of mistake,
Which was it, that 's the question, right or wrong?

What was betrayal? merely pointing out
The person of their leader, at such time,
Such place as he commanded; and what need
Even of this? He did not hide himself,
He was well known, he daily walked abroad
Attended by his followers, preached to crowds,
Healed those who sought his healing, openly,
Roundly denounced the scribes and Pharisees,
Avowed his doctrines and proclaimed his faith.
What need of Judas or of any one
To point him out, betray him as 't is called?
All knew him and could take him when they
pleased.
Betray indeed! what was there to betray?
'T was but the after tragedy alone
That threw a backward, lurid light on it
And made this act of Judas seem so vile.

Suppose the act was infamous, or, at least,
So deemed by any one among the twelve,
Is it not clear that none of them had cried
"Lord is it I?" What! every one of them
Imagined he might be the traitor meant
And do the very act that now the world
Brands as accursëd. No, impossible!

Else they were traitors every one of them,
Traitors in will and thought, if not in deed.

Plainly the act that Judas had to do,
Call it by any ugly name you will
(Names do not alter acts), to none of them
Seemed base, wrong, infamous as now 't is held,
Or all alike were base, vile, infamous, —
Not Judas only, but the whole of them.

Suppose, again, they all were honest men,
Devoted to their leader heart and soul,
And Judas only vile ; that they were shocked
At thought of such betrayal, how explain
Their questioning, "Is it I?" and how explain
Their after silence, with no word to him
Of stern remonstrance, friendly counsel, prayers
To stay his purpose ; failing these, no hand
Lifted to hold him, stop him by main force?

Not only they did naught by word or act,
But Christus' self cried, "What thou hast to do,
Go and do quickly ;" laying as it were
Commands upon him thus to go and act.

What! Christus urged him on, or let him go
To consummate an act of infamy
Without one warning word to hold him back?
It cannot be. This clearly seems to prove
He acted by command. He undertook

A duty laid upon him, no vile thought
Or wish impelling, — else had Christus sought
To save him, turn his mind away from crime,
Remonstrate with him, and not urge him on
To his destruction, as it seems he did.

Suppose, again, a band of men conjoined
For noble purposes and aims like these,
Or even a band of foul conspirators,
With murder in their minds, or what you will.
And suddenly their leader points them out
A traitor sitting with them. "There is he
Who will betray me." Would not all at once
Rise and cry out, remonstrate, threaten, pray,
Seek every means to break his purpose down,
And all these failing, with compelling strength
Seize him and bind him, force him to renounce
His plotted crime; ay, more, when all else failed
Slay him and save their leader by his death?
And he, the traitor, would not he cry out,
Protest, deny, declare, even though in fact
Traitor he meant to be, his innocence?

Ay! they were men of peace, preached love, I know,
Forgiveness; and to raise a stave, a sword,
Was in their estimation wrong. Why, then,
Went they out armed? Two swords at least they had,
And, later, Peter drew his sword and smote

The high priest's servant and cut off his ear.
He wore a sword, at least, and he could strike
When the occasion called, — this did not call.

They did not understand? a poor excuse!
The words were plain, and Judas understood.
How? why? he any more than they?
'T would seem that every one among them there
Knew the intent of Christus, must have known
From all he said before, as well as then.
And, knowing it, approved it, or at least,
Did not oppose it, but let Judas go.
They grieved, indeed! Why did they grieve? at what?
The act of Judas, or their Lord's resolve?

One moment more, when Judas had gone out,
Christus remained with all the rest, and then,
What said he to them? Did he once reprove
This contemplated crime of Judas? No!
Them he reproved, and said, "If me you loved
You would rejoice, because I said I go
Unto the Father. 'T is expedient, too,
That I should go away, for otherwise
The Comforter will never come to you,
And he will glorify me when he comes."
And more he said, and every word implied
That death he courted, with determined mind.

Then they set forth to their accustomed place
Beyond the brook of Cedron, as agreed,

Decided, fixed upon, as Judas knew.
Had Christus then desired to avert his fate,
What easier? He had simply not to go
To the appointed spot. No one could force
His steps to take that path. But his own will
Was fixed; there he would go and only there;
Once only his high spirit seemed to fail,
When, at Gethsemane, he prayed the cup
Might pass away from him; then strong again
He onward went with firm, unfaltering step.

Here I commence the narrative again,
So interrupted, and perhaps too long.
Still, all this weighs so strongly on the case
I could not pass it over. And besides
This, Lysias did not know, or scarcely knew,
And then by vague report. — Now to resume.

"Judas," says Lysias, "when the rest he left,
Came straight to where I was with the high
priests,
Not as a coward, stealing in to do
A dastard act, but with an open face,
And clear, bold voice, and said, 'Behold me here,
Judas, a follower of Christus! Come!
I will point out my master whom you seek!'
And out at once they sent me with my band;
And as we went, I said, rebuking him,
'How, Judas, is it you who thus betray
The lord and master whom you love, to death?'

And, smiling, then he answered, 'Fear you not;
Do you your duty; take no heed of me.'
'Is not this vile?' I said; 'I had not deemed
Such baseness in you.' 'Though it seem so now,'
Still smiling, he replied, 'wait till the end.'
Then turning round, as to himself he said,
'Now comes the hour that I have prayed to see, —
The hour of joy to all who know the truth.'

"'Is this man mad?' I thought, and looked at him;
And, in the darkness creeping swiftly on,
His face was glowing, almost shone, with light;
And rapt as if in visionary thought
He walked beside me, gazing at the sky.

"Passing at last beyond the Cedron brook,
We reached a garden, on whose open gate
Dark vines were loosely swinging. Here we paused,
And lifted up our torches, and behold
Against the blank white wall a shadowy group,
There waiting motionless, without a word:
A moment, and with rapid, nervous step,
Judas alone advanced, and as he reached
The tallest figure, lifted quick his head;
And crying, 'Master! Master!' kissed his cheek.
We, knowing it was Christus, forward pressed.
Malchus was at my side, when suddenly

A sword flashed out from one among them there,
And sheared his ear. At once our swords flashed
out,
But Christus, lifting up his hand, said, 'Peace,
Sheathe thy sword, Peter — I must drink the
cup.'
And I cried also, 'Peace, and sheathe your
swords.'
Then on his arm I placed my hand, and said,
'In the law's name.' At this he turned and stood
A moment, mute, and then stretched forth his
arms
Saying as if to justify himself,
And show that Judas understood him right,
'Think'st thou, if I my Father now beseech,
Even now, he will not send to aid me more
Than legions twelve of angels? But, if so,
How should the Scriptures be fulfilled? I taught
Daily within the temple to you all,
And yet you took me not! This is your hour.
The cup my father gives me I must drink.'

"We took him then and bound his hands with
cords,
He offering no resistance to our will.
This done, I turned, but all the rest had fled,
And he alone was left to meet his fate.

"My men I ordered then to take and bear
Their prisoner to the city; and at once

They moved away. I, seeing not our guide,
Cried, 'Judas!' — but no answer; then a groan
So sad and deep it startled me. I turned,
And there, against the wall, with ghastly face,
And eyeballs starting in a frenzied glare,
As in a fit, lay Judas; his weak arms
Hung lifeless down, his mouth half open twitched.
His hands were clutched and clenched into his robes,
And now and then his breast heaved with a gasp.
Frightened, I dashed some water in his face,
Spoke to him, lifted him, and rubbed his hands.
At last the sense came back into his eyes,
Then with a sudden spasm fled again,
And to the ground he dropped. I searched him o'er,
Fearing some mortal wound, yet none I found.
Then with a gasp again the life returned,
And stayed, but still with strong convulsion twitched.
'Speak, Judas! speak!' I cried. 'What does this mean?'
No answer! 'Speak, man!' Then at last he groaned:
'Go, leave me! leave me, Lysias. O my God!
What have I done? O Christus! Master, Lord,
Forgive me, oh, forgive me!' Then a cry
Of agony that pierced me to the heart,
As groveling on the ground he turned away

And hid his face, and shuddered, in his robes.
Was this the man whose face an hour ago
Shone with a joy so strange? What means it all?
Is this a sudden madness? 'Speak!' I cried.
'What means this, Judas? Be a man and speak!'
Yet there he lay, and neither moved nor spoke.
I thought that he had fainted, till at last
Sudden he turned and grasped my arm, and cried,
'Say, Lysias, is this true, or am I mad?'
'What true?' I said. 'True that you seized the Lord!
You could not seize him — he is God the Lord!
I thought I saw you seize him. Yet I know
That was impossible, for he is God!
And yet you live — you live. He spared you, then.
Where am I? What has happened? A black cloud
Came o'er me when you laid your hands on him.
Where are they all? Where is he? Lysias, speak!'

"'Judas,' I said, 'what folly is all this?
Christus my men have bound and borne away;
The rest have fled. Rouse now and come with me!
My men await me, rouse yourself, and come!'

"Throwing his arms up, in a fit he fell,
With a loud shriek that pierced the silent night.
I could not stay, but, calling instant aid,
We bore him quick to the adjacent house,
And placing him in kindly charge, I left,
Joining my men who stayed for me below.

"Straight to the high priest's house we hurried on,
And Christus in an inner room we placed,
Set at his door a guard, and then came out.
After a time there crept into the hall,
Where round the blazing coals we sat, a man,
Who in the corner crouched. 'What man are you?'
Cried some one; and I, turning, looked at him.
'T was Peter. ''T is a fellow of that band
That followed Christus, and believed in him.'
''T is false!' cried Peter; and he cursed and swore,
'I know him not — I never saw the man.'
But I said nothing. Soon he went away.

"That night I saw not Judas. The next day,
Ghastly, clay-white, a shadow of a man,
With robes all soiled and torn, and tangled beard,
Into the chamber where the council sat
Came feebly staggering: scarce should I have known
'T was Judas, with that haggard, blasted face;

So had that night's great horror altered him.
As one all blindly walking in a dream
He to the table came — against it leaned —
Glared wildly round awhile; — then stretching
forth
From his torn robes a trembling hand, flung
down,
As 't were a snake that stung him, a small purse,
That broke and scattered its white coins about,
And, with a shrill voice, cried, 'Take back the
purse!
'T was not for that foul dross I did the deed —
'T was not for that — oh, horror! not for that!
But that I did believe he was the Lord;
And that he is the Lord I still believe.
But oh, the sin! — the sin! I have betrayed
The innocent blood, and I am lost! — am lost!'
So crying, round his face his robes he threw,
And blindly rushed away; and we, aghast,
Looked round, — and no one for a moment
spoke.

"Seeing that face, I could but fear the end;
For death was in it, looking through his eyes.
Nor could I follow to arrest the fate
That drove him madly on with scorpion whip.

"At last the duty of the day was done,
And night came on. Forth from the gates I
went,

Anxious, and pained by many a dubious thought,
To seek for Judas, and to comfort him.
The sky was dark with heavy, lowering clouds;
A lifeless, stifling air weighed on the world;
A dreadful silence like a nightmare lay
Crouched on its bosom, waiting, grim and gray,
In horrible suspense of some dread thing.
A creeping sense of death, a sickening smell,
Infected the dull breathing of the wind.
A thrill of ghosts went by me now and then,
And made my flesh creep as I wandered on.
At last I came to where a cedar stretched
Its black arms out beneath a dusky rock,
And, passing through its shadow, all at once
I started; for against the dubious light
A dark and heavy mass, that to and fro
Swung slowly with its weight, before me grew.
A sick, dread sense came over me; I stopped —
I could not stir. A cold and clammy sweat
Oozed out all over me; and all my limbs,
Bending with tremulous weakness like a child's,
Gave way beneath me. Then a sense of shame
Aroused me. I advanced, stretched forth my hand,
And pushed the shapeless mass; and at my touch
It yielding swung, the branch above it creaked,
And back returning struck against my face.
A human body! Was it dead, or not?
Swiftly my sword I drew and cut it down,
And on the sand all heavily it dropped.

I plucked the robes away, exposed the face —
'T was Judas, as I feared, cold, stiff, and dead:
That suffering heart of his had ceased to beat."

Thus Lysias spoke, and ended. I confess
This story of poor Judas touched me much.
What horrible revulsions must have passed
Across that spirit in those few last hours!
What storms, that tore up life even to its roots!
Say what you will — grant all the guilt — and still
What pangs of dread remorse — what agonies
Of desperate repentance, all too late,
In that wild interval between the crime
And its last sad atonement! — life, the while,
Laden with horror all too great to bear,
And pressing madly on to death's abyss:
This was no common mind that thus could feel —
No vulgar villain sinning for reward!

Was he a villain lost to sense of shame?
Ay, so say John and Peter and the rest;
And yet — and yet this tale that Lysias tells
Weighs with me more the more I ponder it;
For thus I put it: Either Judas was,
As John affirms, a villain and a thief,
A creature lost to shame and base at heart;
Or else, which is the view that Lysias takes,
He was a rash and visionary man,
Whose faith was firm, who had no thought of crime,
But whom a terrible mistake drove mad.

Take but John's view, and all to me is blind.
Call him a villain who, with greed of gain,
For thirty silver pieces sold his Lord.
Does not the bribe seem all too small and mean?
He held the common purse, and, were he thief,
Had daily power to steal, and lay aside
A secret and accumulating fund;
So doing, he had nothing risked of fame,
While here he braved the scorn of all the world.
Besides, why chose they for their almoner
A man so lost to shame, so foul with greed?
Or why, from some five-score of trusted men,
Choose him as one apostle among twelve?
Or why, if he were known to be so vile,
(And who can hide his baseness at all times?)
Keep him in close communion to the last?
Naught in his previous life, or acts, or words,
Shows this consummate villain that, full-grown,
Leaps all at once to such a height of crime.

Again, how comes it that this wretch, whose heart
Is cased to shame, flings back the paltry bribe?
And, when he knows his master is condemned,
Rushes in horror out to seek his death?
Whose fingers pointed at him in the crowd?
Did all men flee his presence till he found
Life too intolerable? Nay; not so!
Death came too close upon the heels of crime.
He had but done what all his tribe deemed just:

All the great mass — I mean the upper class —
The Rabbis, all the Phariseés and Priests —
Ay, and the lower mob as well, who cried,
"Give us Barabbas! Christus to the cross!"
These men were all of them on Judas' side,
And Judas had done naught against the law.
Were he this villain, he had but to say,
"I followed Christus till I found at last
He aimed at power to overthrow the State.
I did the duty of an honest man.
I traitor! — you are traitors who reprove."
Besides, such villains scorn the world's reproof.

Or he might say: "You call this act a crime?
What crime was it to say I know this man?
I said no ill of him. If crime there be,
'T was yours who doomed him unto death, not mine."

A villain was he? So Barabbas was!
But did Barabbas go and hang himself,
Weary of life, — the murderer and thief?
This coarse and vulgar way will never do.
Grant him a villain, all his acts must be
Acts of a villain; if you once admit
Remorse so bitter that it leads to death,
And death so instant on the heels of crime,
You grant a spirit sensitive to shame, —
So sensitive that life can yield no joys
To counterbalance one bad act; but then

A nature such as this, though led astray
When greatly tempted, is no thorough wretch.
Was the temptation great? Could such a bribe
Tempt such a nature to a crime like this?
I say, to me it simply seems absurd.

Peter at least was not so sensitive.
He cursed and swore, denying that he knew
Who the man Christus was; but after all
He only wept — he never hanged himself.

But take the other view that Lysias takes,
All is at once consistent, clear, complete.
Firm in the faith that Christus was his God,
The great Messiah sent to save the world,
He, seeking for a sign, — not for himself,
But to show proof to all that he was God, —
Conceived this plan, rash if you will, but grand.

"Thinking him man," he said, "mere mortal man,
They seek to seize him. I will make pretense
To take the public bribe and point him out,
And they shall go, all armed with swords and staves,
Strong with the power of law, to seize on him, —
And at their touch he, God himself, shall stand
Revealed before them, and their swords shall drop,
And prostrate all before him shall adore.

And cry, 'Behold the Lord and King of all!'"
But when the soldiers laid their hands on him,
And bound him as they would a prisoner vile,
With taunts, and mockery, and threats of death —
He all the while submitting — then his dream
Burst into fragments with a crash; aghast
The whole world reeled before him; the dread truth
Swooped like a sea upon him, bearing down
His thoughts in wild confusion. He who dreamed
To unbar the gates of glory to his Lord,
Oped in their stead the prison's jarring door,
And saw above him his dim dream of Love
Change to a Fury stained with blood and crime.
And then a madness seized him, and remorse
With pangs of torture drove him down to death.

Conceive with me that sad and suffering heart,
If this be true that Lysias says — Conceive!
Alas! Orestes, not so sad thy fate,
For thee Apollo pardoned, purified, —
Thy Furies were appeased, thy peace returned;
But Judas perished, tortured unto death,
Unpardoned, unappeased, unpurified.
And long as Christus shall be known of men
His name shall bear the brand of infamy,
The curse of generations still unborn.

Thus much of him: I leave the question here,
Touching on naught beyond, for Lucius waits;

I hear him fuming in the courts below,
Cursing his servants and Jerusalem,
And giving them to the infernal gods.
The sun is sinking — all the sky 's afire —
And vale and mountain glow like molten ore
In the intense full splendor of its rays.
A half-hour hence all will be dull and gray;
And Lucius only waits until the shade
Sweeps down the plain, then mounts and makes his way
On through the blinding desert to the sea,
And thence his galley bears him on to Rome.

Salve et vale! — may good fortune wait
On you and all your household! Greet for me
Titus and Livia — in a word, all friends.

A JEWISH RABBI IN ROME.

WITH A COMMENTARY BY BEN ISRAEL.

[*Fifteenth Century. Reign of Sixtus IV.*]

Rabbi Ben Esdra to his dearest friend,
Rabbi Ben Israel, greeting — May the Lord
Keep thee in safety! I am still in Rome,
And, after months of silence, now redeem
My pledge to tell you how this Christian world
(Which here I came to study), nearly viewed,
Strikes me, a Jew born, and with steady faith
In all the Law and Prophets of our land.
Still, though a Jew, it is the Truth I seek, —
Only the Truth, — and, come from whence it will,
I greet it with bent head and reverent heart.
I am a seeker; — though my faith is firm,
I will not tie my mind in knots of creeds.

No more preamble. I am now in Rome,
Where our Jehovah rules not, — but the man
Jesus, whose Life and Fate too well we know,
Is made a God — the cross on which he died
A reverend symbol, and his words the law.
His words, what were they? Love, good-will to man.

His kingdom? Peace. His precepts? Poverty.
Well, are they followed? That's the question now.
What fruit have they produced?

One moment, first.
I think no ill of him. He was sincere,
Lofty of thought, a pure idealist,
Possessed, indeed, by visionary dreams,
But wishing ill to no one, least of all
To us, and to our Faith, which was his own.
I will not say he was entirely wrong
In the strong censures that he laid on us;
For we had many faults — were, as he said,
Only too much like whited sepulchres, —
And then, no good man is entirely wrong,
And none entirely right. The truth is vast,
And never was there Creed embraced it all.
Like all enthusiasts he beheld his half,
Deemed it the whole, and with excess of zeal
Pushed his ideal truth beyond the stretch
Of human practice. Most of what he taught
The wise and good of old had said before.
His healing skill, this sect calls miracles,
A hundred others had as well as he;
And for that claim his followers set up,
And he, perhaps (though here there is much doubt),
Asserted of himself, that he was sent
Messias, King of kings, to save the world, —

This, surely, was no crime deserving death:
No mere opinions, void of acts, are crimes.

Besides, what sect or creed was ever crushed
By cruelty? Our error was perverse,
Willful, unwise. Had we but spared his life,
He would have passed away as others pass, —
Simon and John and Apollonius,
Judas of Galilee, and many more.
But, no! we lifted him above the rest;
Made him conspicuous by his martyrdom;
Watered with blood his doctrines; fired the hearts
Of those who loved him with intemperate zeal
And wild imaginations, till at last
They thought they saw him risen from the dead.
Our folly (call it by its lightest name)
Nourished the seed into this mighty sect,
That takes his name and worships him as God.

Setting aside the superstitious part,
I ask, What were the doctrines that he preached,
And that his followers with their lips profess?
Love! Peace! Good-will to man! This was the gist
Of all he taught. Forgive your enemies!
Seek for the lost sheep from the fold that stray!
Harm no one! For the prodigal returned
Kill the fat calf! Be merciful to all!

Who are the enemies, prodigals, lost sheep,
To whom these Christians give love, mercy, care?
Not we, the Jews, in truth. Is it for us
They kill the calf? Are we the enemies
That they forgive? Have they good-will for us?
Not they! They hold us rather like foul swine, —
Abuse us, — lay great burdens on our backs, —
Spit on us, — drive us forth beyond their walls, —
Force us all slavish offices to do, —
And if we join their sect, scorn us the more.
If those are blessëd, as he says, whom men
Revile and persecute, most blest are we!

Yet was not Jesus, first of all, a Jew, —
Even to his death a Jew? Did he renounce
His strict faith in the Prophets and the Law?
Never! "I come not to destroy," he said,
"The Law or Prophets, only to fulfill."
So, too, his preaching, whatsoe'er it was,
Was to the Jews. The miracles he wrought
Were for the Jews alone. "I am not sent" —
These are his words — "but unto the lost sheep
Of Israel's house: my bread is not for dogs."
Who were the dogs to whom he thus refused
To lend his healing hand? What had she done
Who asked his service that he scorned her thus?
She was from Canaan, or a Greek — no Jew;
This was her crime. 'T is true that, touched at last
By those sad, humble words of hers, "The dogs

May eat the crumbs dropped from the master's
board,"
He made her an exception to his rule, —
But still his rule was this. This his first rule.
No? But it was! Remember the rich youth
Who prayed to be his follower: "Two things,"
He said, "are needful." First, that you obey
The Law and Prophets — that is, are a Jew; —
And then the second, that your wealth and goods
You sell, and give the proceeds to the poor.
First be a Jew, then poor. Renounce all wealth;
Keep nothing back. These are conditions prime,
Refusing which, your following I reject.

I see you gravely shake your head at this;
But read the records, — you will see I 'm right.
Jesus, let me repeat it yet again,
Was first and last a Jew; never renounced
This faith of ours; taught in the Synagogue;
Quoted the Prophets; reaffirmed the Law;
Worked with the Jews, and only healed the Jews,
And held all other nations but as dogs.[1]

[1] (*Commentary by Ben Israel.*)

I 've read the records carefully again:
It goes against my will — still, I admit,
Ben Esdra may be right. Here let me note
One case that he perchance has overlooked —
That of the Publican named Zaccheus.
This man was rich, and, curious, sought to look
On Jesus, — for this purpose climbed a tree.
Jesus, perceiving him, proposed himself
To be his guest; at which a murmuring went

And second (mark this well, and ponder it),
He was a Communist — denied the right
Of private wealth; ordained a common purse
To be administered for all alike,
And all rejected who refused him this.
"'T is easier for a camel to pass through
A needle's eye," — these are his very words, —
"Than that a rich man should inherit heaven."
A rich man, mind you, whether good or bad.
What was the moral of his parable

Among his followers, — for this wealthy man
Was, as they said, a sinner, or no Jew.
But I note this, that Zaccheus on the spot
Surrendered half his goods unto the poor
Ere Jesus went into his house; and then,
And not till then, said Jesus, — "On this house
This day salvation cometh, forasmuch
As he, too, *is* a son of Abraham," —
That is, a Jew. Again, where did he send
His twelve disciples (Judas 'mid the rest)
To preach the Gospel? To the Gentiles? No!
This he forbade, — but "unto the lost sheep
Of Israel's house." And one case more I note, —
That of the woman of Samaria,
To whom he said (his followers murmuring
That he should speak to her): "Salvation comes
But to the Jews." Doubtless, as well we know,
It was unlawful for a Jew to eat
And bide with those who were uncircumcised.
Upon this point, long after he was dead,
Extreme contention 'mid his followers rose,
If Gentiles, ere they had been circumcised,
Into the Christian faith could be baptized, —
Some holding full adherence to the law
A prime condition, — some, that it sufficed
If its main principles were recognized:
But this I merely note. It seems quite clear
That only Jews at first could join the sect.

Of Lazarus and Dives? What offense
Did Dives, that in everlasting fire
He was condemned to suffer? What good deed
Did Lazarus, that he at last should lie
On Abraham's bosom in eternal bliss?
Nothing! The beggar, Lazarus, was poor;
Dives was rich. This was the crime of one,
The virtue of the other. Not one hint
Of any other reason for the hell
Or heaven that he adjudged them — not one word
That Dives was not charitable, kind,
Generous, a helper of his brother man; —
No accusation, save that he was rich.
No word that Lazarus, with all his sores,
Possessed ONE virtue, save that he was poor.
Nay, more: when Dives in his torment sued
For mercy, what did Abraham say to him?
You for your evil deeds must suffer now?
No! but, "You had the good things on the earth,
Lazarus the evil. Therefore, now, to thee
Is torment given — comfort unto him."

Working to pile up wealth Jesus abhorred.
"Each man for all," he said, "and all for each.
Take no thought of to-morrow — for the day
Sufficient will be given. No sparrow falls
Save through God's law. The ravens of the air
Sow not and reap not, yet God feedeth them.
The lilies of the field nor toil nor spin,
Yet Solomon was not arrayed like them.

Why, then, take thought of raiment and of food?
Leave all to God. Blessëd are ye, the poor!
God's kingdom shall be yours: but ye, the rich,
Woe unto you." This was his life and text.
Once only — so the record goes — a rage
Seized upon Jesus, when, with whip and thong,
The money-changers — all who bought and sold —
He from the precincts of the Temple drove,
Saying, "'T is writ, This is the house of prayer,
But ye have made it to a den of thieves."
Let this show what he thought of such as these.
Those who were with him knew and did his will, —
Lived in community of goods, renounced
All private wealth. This doctrine, too, they preached
After his death; and all who joined their sect
Sold their possessions, houses, treasures, lands,
And paid the price into the common store,
To be administered to each one's need.
They did not seek by subterfuge and trick
To cling to Mammon while they worshiped God.[1]

[1] Here I, Ben Israel, note the curious case
Of Ananias and Sapphira, struck
By sudden death, because of all their wealth
They kept a part back for their private use —
Tempting by this the Lord, as Peter said.
But where are the Almighty's lightnings now?

What should a Christian do, then, who accepts
The doctrines that this master, nay, this God
(For so they call him), clearly thus appoints ; —
Live by them, should he not? Not by blank words
Affirm them, but by all his acts and life.
First, love to God — and love to man as well.
Then, peace, forgiveness, kindness, poverty.
What is the Christian practice? War — the sword
As arbiter of all disputes of men —
Reprisals, — persecutions unto death
For all who differ from them — Peter's sword
That Jesus bade him sheathe, — no simple lives
Of frugal fare and pure beneficence,
But luxury and imperious tyranny
In all high places, — all in earnest strife
To pile up wealth for selfish purposes, —
Each greedy for himself, the wretched poor
Down-trodden, trampled on, — the Church itself,
Splendid with pageant, cruel in its power, —
Pride rampant, hissing through a thousand maws, —
Power, like a ravening wolf among the lambs,
Worrying the weakest, — prayers, lip-deep, no more —
The devil's work done in the name of God.

Such is the spectacle I see in Rome.

Among the pomps in which this Christian Church
Invests its pageants, oft I think of him
Whom they pretend to worship, and his words
Come back to me with which he once reproved
Our priests of his own days. The world, indeed,
Has but one pattern for its worldliness, —
Or now, or then, 't is evermore the same.
If we of old were stiff-necked in our pride,
Desiring power instead of godliness,
Avid of pomp, — these Christians are the same:
They will not follow either God or Christ.
"Thus saith the Lord, Stand in the ways, and see;
Ask, where is the good way, and walk therein,
And so ye shall find rest unto your souls.
But they replied, We will not walk therein."
Thus Jeremiah, — Jesus much the same.
Long prayers, low bowings in the market-place,
Chief seats in synagogues, upper rooms at feasts,
Fine linen, costly dresses, pompous rites,
Grand ceremonials, purple trailing robes,
Embroidered hems, and wide phylacteries, —
All this he scorned. Well, still we see the same,
For all his scorn, among his followers.
His very words describe these cardinals
As they were made for them alone, — not us.
Not we alone were whited sepulchres;
Robbed widows, orphans, every one for greed:
This Church still robs them, wears its purple robes,

Prays at the public corners of the streets,
Nor even the outside of the platter cleans.

And what thinks Jesus of it? — if, indeed,
He from beyond can look into their hearts,
Who call upon his name and preach of Peace.
Foul hypocrites, who feed their hungry flocks
With husks of dogmas and dead chaff of talk,
And trample virtue down into the mire.

I ask myself, Do these men ever think
Or weigh their master's teaching, practice, words,
That thus by rote, like empty formulas,
They gabble them, as senseless parrots talk.
Doctrine and life to him were one. To these
Doctrine from life is utterly divorced.

Whatever Jesus was, this Church, these men,
Are none of his, — or ours; his words alone
They worship like a fetish, without sense, —
His real inner teaching they reject;
Nay, are afraid to look it in the face
And seek its meaning, lest it come to this,
That they must choose between the things he would,
And what they covet dearer than their life.

Jew as I am, in view of them, at times
I long to see some real Christian sect
Ready to take the system that he taught,

And try it in this world, — not talking Peace,
Good-will to men, Love, Justice, Charity,
But living it in very deed, — a sect
That should abjure all individual greed,
All competition for a selfish end,
And joining, make one common purse for all,
As Jesus did among his followers.
Would it succeed? Ah, you and I are Jews;
Jesus has no authority with us.
But were we Christians, and not hypocrites, —
Did we believe that he was really God,
Or even that his mission was divine, —
How should we dare to gloss his teachings o'er,
And twist his doctrines so that they should fit
Our worldly needs, and in the very face
Of his plain orders seek some verbal trick
To warp them to the life we like to lead!

The Eternal One must needs look down and smile
At these base wrigglings of his creatures here,
Filled with sad pity, too, at their offense, —
Seeing them do, with his name on their lips,
All he forbids, and dreaming none the less
They only shall be saved, — all others damned.

Would Jesus' plan succeed? — The world thus far
Has taken another path, — we most of all, —
Believing not in him, nor in his scheme; —

But dreaming — shaking, as it were, from me
All usages and habits of the world,
At times I stretch my mind out in the vague,
And seek upon this plan to build a world.
No property, but that which all should own
With equal rights, — the product of all work
Held for the common good in trust for all;
All, to the lowest, to be clothed, fed, housed,
Freed from necessity and from the wolf
Of hunger, and the pains and pangs of life;
Each having claims on all to do the task
Best fitted for his powers, tastes, happiness;
Each as a duty bound to do his share,
And not to be a drone within the hive.

What glory might the world then see! — what joy!
What harmony of work! what large content!
What splendid products of joint industry!
All toiling with one purpose and one heart;
No war, no waste of noble energies, —
But smiling peace, the enlarging grace of art;
Humanity a column with its base
Of solid work, and at its summit crowned
With the ideal capital of Love!

This is a dream that turns this world of ours
Quite upside down; — I 'll say no more of it.

And yet one word more, lest you deem me fool!
Think not I dream: none but a fool could dream
Equality of rights, — that is, the claim
To justice, life, food, freedom in the bound
Of common benefit, involves the claim
To equal virtues, powers, intelligence, —
Since God in these unequal shaped us all,
And fitted each one for his special end.
So should the wise, just, virtuous take the lead,
Or all at once is lawless anarchy;
For what more fatal, hopeless, than a scheme
Where wise and good, and fool and knave alike,
Own equal powers and rights in government?

But how secure the leadership to those
Whom God hath made for leaders? Ah, my friend,
That is the question none hath e'er resolved;
For liberty, at best a negative —
Mere freedom from restraint — engenders soon
License and tyranny, — dire positives:
Just as Aurelius, best of emperors,
Begot for son the cruel Commodus.

Danger on all sides threatens government.
Choose you a king, — the very best is weak, —
And fierce temptation dogs the path of power.
Choose you the Demos, — it perchance is worse;
For then, as in an agitated sea,

The frothiest ever to the surface swims.
Caprice, rage, panic, interest, sway the mob;
Justice is overstormed, wisdom lies low,
And noisy ignorance, swollen by the breath
Of blatant demagogues, wrecks the lost state.

Why? — But because the eager lust of men,
The godless strife of utter selfishness,
Makes of the world a blind and brutal herd,
All crowding on, devoid of common aim, —
Each goring his own way to make his path.

Well, seeing this, and how these blundering schemes
Beget a brood of sin and misery,
Said Jesus to his followers: All is wrong;
Let it be all reversed, — such life is hate;
But God is love: try love, then, for your scheme,
Try God's law; — as the Book of Wisdom saith:
"All hatred stirreth strife; but love hath power
To cover up all sins;" and yet again:
"He who his neighbour scorneth, sins; but he
Is happy who hath mercy for the poor."
"The profit of the earth is made for all,
And riches breed disease and vanity."
So saith the preacher, just as Jesus said.
Nothing was new in Jesus' scheme but this, —
To make community a fact — no dream.[1]

[1] And scarcely this, say I, Ben Israel —
Commenting on this letter. We of old

But new or old, his followers obeyed,
Accepting what he taught. Their life was pure, —
They craved no gains, abjured all private wealth;
Preached poverty, and practiced what they preached;
And then, with stealthy step, and half-veiled face,
Pride entered, and ambition; and they shaped
That fair community into the thing
Now called a Church, and on its altar raised
The same false idol he had driven forth;

Among the patriarchs ever practiced it.
And well it worked, till, into cities packed,
Men grew ambitious, greedy, void of God,
And then confusion came to one and all.
The greed of riches is the curse of man:
Virtue and wisdom only, hand in hand,
Have any rightful claims to power; the wise,
The good, in every age affirm the same, —
Solon, Confucius, Plato, Thales, all.
"Flee greed, choose equal rights," Menander says.
When Greece made question of her wisest men
What is the best form of all government,
Thales replied, — "Where none are over-rich,
None over-poor;" and Anacharsis said, —
"Where vice is hated — virtue reverenced."
So Pittacus, — "Where honours are conferred
But on the virtuous;" and Solon, too,
In thought, if not in words, like Jesus spoke, —
"Where any wrong unto the meanest done
Is held to be an injury to all."
So also Solomon, — "Remove me far
From vanity and lies; and give to me
Nor poverty nor wealth. Blessed is he
Who for the poor and needy giveth thought:
The Lord shall help him in his time of need."

And now what is this Church so called of Christ?
The last and even the most hideous shape
Of tyranny — that spawns upon the world
As love's true offspring the foul serpent brood
Of superstition, bigotry, and hate.

Thus looking on, and striving as I can
To keep my mind wide open to new thought,
I weave my dream of what the world might be, —
A vague wild dream, but not without its charm.
Since nothing in our Law forbids to us
The trial of this scheme, suppose we Jews —
(Nay, do not smile) — suppose we very Jews
Go on and do even this, the Christians' work:
They will not do it, — oh, be sure of that!

No more of this: oh, my Jerusalem! —
Thou whom again we shall rebuild in power —
Let Justice be thy strong foundation-stones,
And Love the cement that shall knit them close.
Firm in our faith — at last — at last, O Lord!
When we have suffered to the bitter end,
Thy chosen people Thou wilt lift again,
And sweep thy enemies before thy path.

Come not to Rome, — it is the sink of vice:
Its grandeur is decayed; its splendid days
Are faded. Famine, War, and Pestilence —
Tempest and inundation and fierce hordes
Have o'er it swept, with ruin in their track.

The herdsman tends his flocks upon the Hill
Where Manlius drove the Gauls. The Capitol
Scarcely exists in name: its temples proud
Are wrecked and ruined. In the Forum herd
Horned cattle; and beyond the Flaminian gate,
Where once triumphant swarmed the crowds of Rome,
Spreads a flat marsh o'ergrown with rustling canes,
Where flocks of whirring wild-fowl make their home.
Death haunts the temples, once so full of life.
Life crowds the tombs where the dead Cæsars lie,
And fortifies their wrecks for deadly feud.
The arts have perished. Prone upon the earth
Lie shattered the proud statues of their gods,
While the rude builder breaks them with his pick,
Or burns them into lime. The games are o'er;
The streets are filled with ruffian soldiery,
Quick at a quarrel; and the deadly knife
Of treachery stabs the unsuspecting foe.
Upon the Castle every week are seen
Black corpses, nailed along the outer walls.
The city throngs at night with bravos hired,
Who after murder find a safe retreat
In many a priestly palace. In a word,
Rapine and murder, rape and parricide,
Ay, ev'ry crime, with or without a name,

Ravage the city. Justice, with sad face,
Weeping, hath fled, and Mercy's voice is dumb.
Is this the reign of Christ — or Belial?

Yet still I linger here: I scarce know why.
There is a charm that, all beyond my will,
Allures me, holds me, will not let me go.
'T is not indeed like our Jerusalem;
Yet in its age, its sorrows and its wrongs,
It is allied to her, — a city sad,
That, like a mourner weeping at a tomb,
Sits clad in sackcloth, grieving o'er the past,
Hoping for nothing, stricken by despair.
Sad, lonely stretches compass her about
With silence. Wandering here, at every step
We stumble o'er some ruin, once the home
Of happy life; or pensive, stay our feet
To ponder o'er some stern decaying tomb,
The haunt of blinking owls. Nor all in vain
Doth kindly nature strive to heal the wounds
Of Time and human rage: with ivy green,
With whispering grasses, reeds, and bright-eyed
flowers,
Veiling its ruin; and with tremulous songs
Of far larks hidden in the deep blue sky,
Lifting the thoughts to heaven.

Here many a day
Alone I stray, and hold communion sad
With dreams that wander far on boundless ways

Of meditation vague, recalling oft
The passages of Prophets in our Land.
At times Isaiah seems to speak, and say
To Rome, as once unto Jerusalem:
"Judah is fallen, ruin hath involved
Jerusalem. What mean ye that ye beat
My people into pieces? that ye grind
The faces of the poor? The Lord shall take
The bravery of thy ornaments away;
Thy men shall perish by the sword in war;
Thy mighty ones shall perish, and thy gates
Lament and mourn; and thou, being desolate,
Shalt sit upon the ground. Woe unto them
That draw iniquity with the weak cords
Of vanity, and call the evil good, —
Their roots shall be as rottenness, like dust
Their blossoms perish, — for they cast away
The Lord's law, and despise his Holy Word."

And then in sorrow for this grievous fate
In which we are plunged, I comfort me with this —
That he, the Eternal One, hath promised us
That we at last shall from our sorrows rest,
And from our fear, and from our bondage dire,
And build again our new Jerusalem.

And yet once more. Hear Jeremiah speak:
"How doth the city solitary sit
That once was filled with people! How is she

Become a widow, that among the powers
Was great, and princess in the provinces?
She weepeth sorely in the night; her tears
Are on her cheeks; and of her lovers none
Will comfort her." Ah, my Jerusalem!
Thy sister here is Rome, and sins like thee,
And she shall suffer also like to thee.

As she hath suffered for her heathen pride
And worship of false gods, and now is cast
Headlong to earth with all her temples proud,
So shall she suffer in the time to come
For all her violence and worldly lust,
And all her utter falseness to her faith.
Is there no place upon this wretched earth
Where God shall have his own, and peace shall reign?
Is there no spot the devil doth not own?
Shall we, poor human wretches, ever seek
To thwart God's law, and rear up in his stead
Base idols, and make covenant with Death?

Such thoughts come over me, oppressed and sad,
As 'mid Rome's ruined tombs I meditate,
Feeling how transient a thing is man,
Whose life is but a shadow on the grass
That comes and goes, or like a passing wind,
Or like a voice that speaks and vanishes.
And sitting silent under the blue sky

That broods unchanging o'er the change below,
Idly I watch the drooping ivy swing
Through sunlit loops of arching aqueducts,
Printing its wavering shadow on the sward.
Or, as my eye runs down their lessening lines,
Broken by gaps of time and war, and strung
Along the far Campagna's rolling stretch
Like vertebræ of some huge skeleton,
I ponder o'er the past of Rome, — the pomp,
The pride, the power, the ruin, — masters, slaves,
Conquerors, and victims, even the gods themselves,
Shattered and fallen and equal in the dust —
And silent Nature calmly moving on,
Heedless of them, and what they were or did,
As she will be of us, when we are gone.
Often, again, with scarce a conscious thought, —
My spirit wandering vaguely, who knows where, —
I gaze upon the cloud-shades trailing slow
O'er the deep chasms of the opaline hills,
And drift with them through some abyss of space,
And feel the silence sink into my soul.
At times a rustling starts me, and I see
Some long-haired goat, that, mounting up to crop
A wandering spray, peers down through glass-
gray eyes,
And, pausing, stares at me. At times, again,
I hear the thud of hoofs upon the grass,
And jangling swords, and voices of command,
As some armed troop goes galloping along.
And then I hide me, knowing that my tribe

Are only recognized to be the butt
Of mocking words — or scarce more wounding
blows.
The shepherd, leaning idly on his staff,
Alone has kindly words for such as we, —
For Nature hath subdued him into calm,
Until he almost seems a part of her.

I have seen the Pope, whom in their blasphemy
They term God's Holiness. A fisherman,
Like Peter, was his father; and his son,
By mock humility and specious ways
Veiling his inward self, inly devoured
By lust of place, and luxury, and power,
Hath mounted in the end to Peter's chair.
Peter was poor and simple at the least, —
Honest though ignorant. This Sixtus here,
Fourth of his name, his utter opposite, —
Luxurious, worldly, fierce, and stained with crime.
There are no limits to his low desires, —
None to his passions; and he treads us down
As if we were the offal of the earth.

Last week he gave a banquet that, I think,
Poor Peter would have been aghast to see:
'T is said it cost some twenty thousand crowns,
Shaming Vitellius with its cost and waste.
But this is nothing to his other deeds.
Little he thinks of carrying out the dream
Of which I just have spoken. No! the poor

Starve on black bread, and fester in disease,
While thus he lords it in his luxury.
Nor are the rich much better off with him:
A short month since he pillaged an old man —
The Prince Colonna — on some poor pretense; —
Robbed him of all his plate, robes, tapestries,
Tore him with torture, then lopped off his head;
And clothed in wretched rags to mock his rank,
Sent back in answer to his mother's prayers
For his mere life — the mutilated corpse!
And this is God's vicegerent on the earth —
The head of what they call the Christian Church!

Bad as the Christian's lot is, ours is worse:
We are the football and the scorn of all, —
Laden with taxes, tributes, — forced to wear
An ignominious badge, — banned from the town,
And huddled in the Ghetto's filthy den.
No public office may we hold: our oath
Avails not in their courts against the word
Of any Christian; and now, worse than this,
In these last years one degradation more
Is cast upon us by this Christian court,
Whose creed is, "Love your neighbour as yourself."
We are but beasts that in the Carnival
Must race half-naked, clothed but round the loins,
A halter on our necks, as we were dogs, —
Insulted, hooted, jeered at by the mob.

No one of us is free of this, — or old
Or young, whatever be our state, —
Elder or priest or child, — it matters not.
High ladies, cardinals in purple robes,
Ay, even the Pope himself, with all his court,
Seated on high, in all their pomp and pride,
Laugh at us, as we stumble on our course,
Pelted with filth, and shake their holy sides,
Encouraging the mob that mock at us.

But what offends me more than all the rest
Is that this usage has debased our tribe, —
Bent its proud neck, and forced it to the earth, —
Taught us to cringe and whimper, taught us wiles,
And driven us at their beck to creep and crawl.
We, who were God's own people, — we must bow
Before these Christians: with a smile accept
Even their kicks, and humbly give them thanks
For our mere life. This stings me to the quick.
As for what Christ said, "Love your enemies;
Bless them that curse you, and do good to them," —
This is beyond the power of any man —
Beyond my power at least, — I curse them all!

I stay my pen here, — for the hot blood boils
Within my brain when thinking on these things:
I dare not trust myself to write you more.

My work is almost done for which I came,
And soon I hope to greet your face again,
Shaking the dust off from this godless place,
With all its rottenness and infamy:
Then for my dear Jerusalem again!

Greet all my friends, — Rebecca, Ishmael,
And all your dear ones. Peace be with you all!
I count the days till we once more shall meet.

A PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN IN ROME.

DEDICATED TO T. G. A.

It seems so strange to us of the new faith,
Who feel its beauty, joy, and holiness,
Rising above this lower Pagan creed,
Like morning o'er the dark and dreaming earth;
To us who have beheld, known, talked with those
Who walked beside our Lord, and heard his voice,
And with their own eyes saw his miracles, —
To hear these Romans, Marcus, Caius — nay,
Even Lucius, who is learned, liberal, trained
In every school of thought, deny them all:
Calling them mere impostures, or at best,
Distortions of the facts, half true, half false,
With nothing but the false miraculous!
It makes us grieve, as showing how they lack
That sense by which alone the natural man,
As Paul says, can receive the things of God.
But when had any Roman in all time
A spiritual sense? 'T is to the East
The power of prophecy is given: alone
It shapes religions, has the inner sight
That through the matter sees the soul beyond,

Is through its faith receptive, not its mind,
And nearer unto God, as is the child.
The West, immersed in things, is as the man,
And joys to fashion governments and laws:
It orders facts, it thinks, invents, and works,
But blind and deaf to spiritual truth
Lives in the Present, builds no infinite bridge
Into the Future, hopes not, nor divines.
At highest, 't is the world's great intellect,
Its understanding, brain, and not its soul.
Lucius is of the West; he cannot feel
Those finer impulses beyond the sense,
Those inward yearnings stretching out of sight,
Where reason cannot follow, after truth.
As far as intellect can lead him on
Up the clear path of logic, he will go;
The rest is nonsense, and, of course, he likes
The well-trod path as being the most safe.
And thus he reasons on the miracles: —

"Of facts like these, conforming to no law,
There are a thousand chances of mistake
To one in favour of the apparent facts, —
First, self-deception; strong desire to see
Begets the power of seeing; from itself
The nervously expectant sense projects
Its image, its mirage, or hears returned
The outward echo of the inward voice;
And while the reason and the judgment drowse,
The fancy, all alive, sees, hears, accepts.

Then come illusions of the senses ; — Facts
Half seen are wholly false, — scarce facts at all.
Let but the fact be strange and new, surprise
Destroys the power of scrutiny. — Again,
Wonder, the habitual state of many minds
(Those, most of all, religiously inclined),
Love of the marvelous, a dread to peer
Too keenly into that which wears a garb
Of holiness, a proneness to revere
What others reverence — all lead astray.
Belief is passive : it receives, accepts ;
But doubt is active : it disputes, rejects.
You think these wonders, facts. You say that Christ
Was holy in his aspect, pure in life,
And in his perfectness above mankind.
I will not question this : I only say
He was a man, at best, and not a god.
The Jews could not have crucified a god.
No, nor a demigod, like Hercules.

" Observe, I do not say as others do,
That he was wicked in intent, and sought
A kingly crown above his wretched tribe.
And if he did, I care not. What he said
Was well enough, only it was not new.
All that is good is found in Socrates,
Or Plato, or the old Philosophies.
Had he been born in Greece, he might, perhaps,

Have graced the train of one of these great men.
But in that dismal Syria, 'mid a herd
Of ignorant Jews, most of them fishermen,
Who worshiped him, he lost all common sense.
From what I hear, he grew half-cracked at last,
And thought himself a god, and claimed the power
Of miracles, like other madmen here.
Well, well: he suffered for all that by death,
And, I dare say, was better than the most
Among that loathsome people. For all that,
Touched in his brain he was, you must admit.
For what man in his senses ever dreamed
He from the dead should rise with pomp and power
A kingdom to establish on the earth?

"As for his miracles, I do not doubt
That some among that herd of credulous fools,
On whom he practiced, thought they saw these things.
But who was there with eyes and mind well trained
To sift the facts, to judge the evidence,
To question, to examine, to record?
Not one: the stupid crowd cried 'miracle'
(For everything is miracle to them);
The Scribes and Pharisees, the learned men,
All stood aloof and scorned him and his works.

"And were they true, what prove they? — Why, in Rome
These wonder-working magians come by scores,
Each with his new inspired theogony,
Each with his miracle to prove him God!
For instance, there is Judas, whom they call
The Gaulonite; and his three sons as well;
There is Menander, and Cerinthus too,
Theudas, and the greatest two of all,
Simon of Gitton, named the Magian,
And Apollonius of Tyana.
Thousands assert for them, as you for Christ,
A supernatural power, a gift divine.
What shall I say? All surely are not gods!
No! nor a single one. Some, as I hear,
Are scholars versed in Egypt's mystic lore,
And by the subtle thought of Greece imbued,
With minds enriched by travel and strange tongues,
And skilled in writing, teaching, prophecy:
'T is even said their prophecies prove true!
If so, by chance, by happy guess, no more.
Yet if I hold these miracles of theirs
As mere delusions (and you say they are),
How can you ask me to accept on faith
Those Christ (a good man, if you will, but yet
An untaught Jew of Galilee) performed,
Far out of sight, with none to vouch for them
Except a ruck of wretched ignorant Jews?
As for their doctrines, systems, forms of faith,

There is an Eastern likeness in them all,
Simon or Christ — 't is nearly the same thing.

" And so this magian had the power, you think,
To drive out shrieking devils from the breasts
Of madmen, and compel them by his will
To rush into a herd of guiltless swine;
Nay, that he cured the sick, and raised the dead,
One Lazarus, four days buried, till he stank;
Even more, that he could raise himself to life
When crucified and dead, and in his tomb;
And all because these awe-struck vulgar Jews
Saw some one like him, and affirmed 't was he.
A woman first, a Mary Magdalene,
Set all these stories going. Who was she?
A half-mad courtesan, one who had owned
Her seven devils — but of her the less
You say the better. You 'll at least admit
The kingdom that he promised on the earth,
The pomp, the power, the glory, were all trash.
He vanished very swiftly out of sight
For all his promises, and left the fools
Who trusted him to gape and stare to see
Some day the heavens open, as he said,
And him with angels coming. When he comes
Pray give me notice; — I, too, will believe;
Till then, excuse me; on such evidence
Of such grave portents, I to change my faith!
I would not hang a sparrow on it all."

So Lucius thinks, and talks, and never sees
How strange a contradiction in him lies;
For he believes in all the wildest myths,
And miracles, and wonders of his gods,
Ay, and his demigods as well, and pays
To them his reverential sacrifice.
Like a good pagan, he believes them all,
Though he admits, of course, he never saw,
Nor any eyes of any living man;
Though all the evidence is far away,
Dimmed and obscured by misty centuries;
And though these myths are vouched by writings vague
Or by tradition only, differing, too,
In each tradition. Yet this faith being fixed,
Established by long ages of belief,
It must be true; and our good Lucius sees
In all these variations proofs of truth.
The facts remain, he says, despite them all,
Colored by this report or that report,
For this is human merely — only shows
How various minds are variously impressed;
One sees the fact as red, one green, one blue,
But all this difference proves the existing fact.

But when Christ comes within our very reach,
And living crowds behold his miracles,
Attesting them by strenuous belief,
And sudden cries, and life-long change of faith,
All are deceived; such strange things cannot be!

Yet either they were true or false. If false,
How were these crowds impressed to think they saw
What never happened? Is not this as strange,
As wondrous as the miracles themselves?
"Tricks, tricks," he says, "they only thought they saw;
Do not a juggler's tricks deceive us all?
I have no faith in Apollonius
For all the evidence — it must be trick.
In ancient times the gods came down to man,
Assuming human powers — but that is past;
But when a human creature of to-day
Assumes their functions, and works miracles
Against the laws of nature, and calls up
The dead, the best thing is to hold him mad."

No! Lucius will not try the old and new
By the same test; a kind of mystery shrouds
The ancient fact; the current of belief
For generations carries him along.
The early faith, stamped on his childish mind,
Can never be erased — 't is deep as life.
The priest, the sacrifice, the daily rites,
The formula, the fashion, the old use
Possess him, coloring all his life and thought;
And we, who in the new, pure faith rejoice,
Seem to his eyes, at least, but fools misled,
Who only seek his gods to overthrow,
And to whom ruin in the end must come.

We smile in pity — let us, too, be just.
'T is hard to root up all one's faith at once;
All the old feelings, all the happy dreams,
All the sweet customs, the long growth of years.
The very superstitions of our youth
Have fragrance in them. Underneath the words
We faltered, clinging to a mother's hand,
A dim, sweet music flows. To that old song
No new-writ verse will ever run so smooth.

We strike his faith, and whoso strikes our faith
We hold as foe — and oft lose sight of Truth
Defending dogmas, doctrines, formulas,
Shells though they be, from which the life has fled.
While yet the mind is plastic to a touch,
The die of doctrine strikes, deep in, our faith,
And age but hardens the impression there.
Half our fixed notions are but ancient ruts
Of empty words and formulas of thought,
Worn in by repetition and long use —
And easy run the wheels within these ruts.
He who assails and goads the mind to think,
Or starts it from the grooves of prejudice,
We call foul names, we hate, we scorn, we fear;
He seems at once a foe to man and God.
What will he do? Old superstitious props
Hold up our lives; if they be stricken down,
What shall befall us? Oh! that way lies death!
Old miracles, myths, dogmas, all things old,

Are reverent for their age. It is the new
We have to fear: as if God did not work
With fresh abounding power in our own day,
In our own souls; as if dead creeds could hold
The living spirit, and these pagan husks
Forever feed the soul that starves for Truth.

I will not say but in old myths resides
Something of good — some tender living germ
Of beauty and delight. Though I renounce
Their errors for this higher, holier life
That Christ has given; still, 't is sweet to think
Of Aphrodite rising from the sea,
The incarnate dream of beauty; of the staid,
Calm dignity of wisdom bodied forth
In grand Minerva; of the gracious joy,
The charm of nature, Bacchus represents;
Of Flora scattering flowers and breathing spring;
Of all those lovely shapes that lurking gleam
Through nature's sunny openings. Ah! I know
Reason rejects them for a higher thought,
And yet, at times, that old sweet faith returns
To tempt me back in its poetic train.
At times, the one Eternal Father seems
So far away, and this fair world that teemed
With airy shapes, so void and cold and bare.

But this is folly. Yet if in my heart
Old superstitions still possess a charm,
How harshly blame our Lucius, who remains

Fixed in the old — to whom we only seem
Rash innovators, bringing in new gods?
Of other stuff is our friend Caius made.
The folly of this faith he will admit;
"And yet," he says, "the system stands our stead
Despite its follies — why then cast it down?
Truth is impossible; we cannot know;
The impenetrable veil of destiny
Behind our life, before our life is dropped.
All is an idle guess, and this mixed creed
Of superstitions has its gleams of truth.
It served our fathers; if we cast it down
Then chaos comes. Thinking results at last
In wretchedness. We cannot hope to know.
Only the gods know. Man's mind must be fed
With superstitions mixed with truth; pure truth
Would merely madden; for as we are made
Half mind, half matter, so our thoughts must be.
Then let our faith stand where it is; the beams
Are rotten here and there, but he who mends
May topple down the temple on our heads,
And leave us godless. Nay, the parasite
Of superstition, like the ivy, knits
The old wall's crumbling stones. For higher minds
A higher truth, a purer faith — but *that*
Through all these forms, we, who have eyes, can see,
The forms themselves the common herd demand.

Since all at last is theory, the best
Is to be happy, calm, and confident.
What is, is — and we cannot alter it.
Then plague me not with revelations new.
All things are revelations; every creed
Comes from above, from God, from all the gods.
Pure sunlight blinds the eye, so comes it veiled
With soft suffusion in the ambient air;
The sun, itself one speck — the positive
Set in an infinite negative of sky,
And beauty, offspring of the eternal light,
Dimmed to soft hues to suit our mortal sense.

"As for your miracles, I heed them not;
For all things, in one sense, are miracles.
Who can explain the simplest fact of life,
As how we see, or move our hand, or speak,
Or how we think, or what is life or death?
By dint of daily doing use wears out
All strangeness; and with words which but restate
And group the facts, we fancy we explain.
Our so-called laws of nature are but rules
Drawn by experience from recurrent facts,
Which every new phenomenon corrects.
Cause and effect are only cheating words;
We know no causes, we but see effects.
Yet, as in one sense all is miracle,
So, in another, no such thing exists.
The new, the strange, outside the common rule

Of man's experience, seems miraculous,
For mortal eyes are dim, and short of sight.
But could we through this world's phenomena
Pierce to the essence and the life of things,
All would arrange itself to perfect law —
No breaches, no exceptions, all pure law."

Our Decimus, who hopes to win the rank
Of tribune, takes a somewhat different view.
"Don't talk to me," he says, "of right or wrong,
Of true or false; we all must take the world
For what it is. Against established things
Why run your head, and spoil your chance in life?
Christ may have been a god, or he may not,
But here in Rome we worship other gods;
Better or worse is not the question here.
If you would win success, go with the crowd,
Nor like a fool against the current strive;
What will you gain by warring with the time,
And preaching doctrines that the general mind
Considers impious? Even were they true,
They only raise up foes to tread you down.
As for myself, I 'm not the babbling fool
To utter all I think. I sacrifice
With all the rest, perform the common rites,
And do the thing that 's deemed respectable;
And so I win the favor of all men.
What care I if the crowd be right or wrong?
I use them just to serve my purposes,

As steps whereby to rise to place and power.
One should not be the last to leave the old,
Nor yet the first to welcome in the new.
The popular belief — that is my faith;
My gods are always on the side that wins."

Marcus, the augur, whose whole life is spent
In omens, auguries, and sacrifice,
And service at the temple in white robes,
So deep is sunken in the pagan rut
He cannot start his mind even to think.
Our creed to him is rank impiety,
Worthy of death. He to the beasts would throw
Whoever dares our doctrines to embrace.
His faith is absolute; no shade of doubt
Has ever crossed him; he is planted there
Firm as a tree, or rather, like a wall;
A tree lives, grows, but he is simply dead,
Stone upon stone, dull, dead, fixed, like a wall.
Thus, buttressed up by custom's honoured props,
Established in the faith of centuries,
Engraved with mystic lines and Orphean hymns,
Old saws and sacred lore of ancient priests,
An honest, absolute, stolid wall he stands,
Firm to uphold the statues of the gods,
And shield them from the assaults of impious men.
If I beseech him to consider well
And reason on his faith, he cries, amazed,
"Reason! what more fallacious guide than that?

Reason! with human reason do you dare
To explain the gods, and to assail our faith?
They in the days of old revealed themselves,
Assumed our shapes, ordained the sacrifice
Of blood and wine upon our altars poured,
Their power attested by miraculous deeds,
And still by omens, portents, auguries,
Inform and aid us on our human path.
You do not understand them? oh, indeed!
And so you summon them before your bar,
Bid them explain their doings and their laws,
And if they fail to meet your views, why, then
You judge them and reject them. Oh, I see!
The gods must ask leave to be gods from us,
And beg our pardon if by ways obscure,
Instead of common human ways, they work,
Or else we will arise and get new gods.
Oh, Jupiter! who are these impious men?
Whence do they come, what do they mean, who thus
Set up at Rome their superstitions vile,
And with their feeble reason dare oppose
The will of heaven? Go, atheist, infidel,
Go, and ask pardon of the gods, and learn
Obedience, and humility, and fear,
Or Jove himself will from his right hand launch
His thunderbolt, and sweep you to your fate."

At times, this solid, settled faith of his
Shakes me with doubt. For what if he be right,

And this new faith that so commends itself
To all I am and hope, be, at the worst,
Temptation and delusion, shall I set
My face against the verdict of the world?
Shall not the faith that soothed the dying bed
Of Socrates — the faith that Plato taught
And Cicero avowed, suffice for me?
Shall I dare question what such minds affirm?
"Obey! obey!" a voice within me cries
('T is the old echo of my early faith),
And then, "Arouse!" cries out a stronger voice,
"Arouse! shake off this torpor! Sink not down
In the old creed — easy because 't is old;
In the dead faith — so fixed, because 't is dead."

Let us go in and speak with Paul again.
He is so strong, he braces up our faith,
And stiffens all the sinews of the mind.

PHIDIAS TO PERICLES.

So the old crew are at their work again,
Spitting their venom-froth of calumny,
And Menon's is the voice that now gives cry,—
A poor weak tool for those who lurk behind,
Hid in the dark to prick him to their work;
For who so blind as not to recognize
The hand of Cleon, the coarse demagogue,
Who rails at all to gain a place himself;
And scurrilous Hermippus, and the rest
Of that mean pack we know so well of old?

'T is sorry work, for which high-minded men
Must feel contempt, or pity at the least.
Menon I hoped at first would merely prove
An honest tool, bewrayed to a false charge
But honest in his purpose, though too free
In quick aspersion, taking little heed
To seek for truth, and careless where he struck
And whom he wounded; but since still he clings
To his foul calumny, and stoops to pick
Even from the gutter aught that serves his turn,
I give him up. Let him go with the rest.

Yet those who urge him on I rather scorn;
And for this charge now boldly cried at last
Into the public ear, I give him thanks.
So long as scandal, like a slimy snake,
Crawled in the grass, and hissed, and darted out
Its poisonous fangs in ambush, none could tell
Where it was creeping; now it shows its head,
And we may crush it like a noisome thing.

High as man stands when at his godlike heights
Of valour, honour, justice, and large thought,
The noblest shape the gods have ever made,
He in his lowest vices is more low
Than any wretched reptile on the earth.
We do dumb creatures wrong to liken them
To some mean talking creatures, who spit forth
Their envious venom, and with poisonous tongue
Of foul detraction sting their fellow-man.
Beasts have not these mean vices — only men.

You, Pericles, and I, do what we will,
Are guilty, both of us, of one offense
That envious natures never can forgive —
The great crime of success. If we were low
They would not heed us; but the praise of men
Lavished on us in Athens, right or wrong,
Rouses their anger. They must pull us down.
What can we hope for better than the fate
Of Anaxagoras, Miltiades,

Themistocles, or any, in a word,
Of those who in our Athens here have stood
In lofty places? It was crime enough
For Aristides to be called "The Just."

And yet some consolation lies in this:
'T is at the tallest poppies that men strike;
'T is at fruit-bearing trees that they throw stones.

There are some natures so perverse, they feed
And batten upon offal; unto them
Nothing is pure or noble, nothing clean,
On which they do not seek to cast a stain.
They, like the beetle, burrowing in the dark,
Gather 'mid mould and rot their noisome food,
And issuing into sunlight roll their ball
Of filth before them, deeming it the world;
Honour and truth, fair dealing, upright aims,
Bare honesty, to them are only shams,
Professions, catch-words, that a man may use
To gull the world with, not realities.
Is there a tree that lifts into the air
Its glad green foliage: there like cankered pests
These vermin crawl and bite. Is there a fruit
That glows and ripens in the summer sun:
There speed these wasps to buzz and sting and stain.
Whence come into their minds these hints and taunts

Of fraudulent and evil practices
They cast at other men with such free hands?
Are they not germs spontaneously bred
Of their own natures — germs of evil thoughts,
Of possibilities, if not of facts,
That in themselves might ripen into deeds?
In the clean nature no such growth is bred;
What is repulsive to our inner sense
We deem impossibilities to all.

Let me not be unjust: this paltry few
Who in our Athens do their dirty work
Are bad exceptions to the better rule
Of honest and high-minded men, who scorn
Such arts to rise, ungoaded by the spur
Of envy, deeming the world wide enough
For all like brothers heartily to work.
And I would fain believe that even they
Who use these arts and spread these calumnies
Are troubled by remorse in better hours,
And feel the sting of conscience, and abjure
These lies that come like curses home to roost.

Because we will not strike our hands in theirs,
Drink with them, haunt with them the market-
place,
Use their low practices to court the rich,
Hint falsehoods, that we dare not frankly say,
Flatter and fawn for favors, sneer at all —
Even those we publicly profess our friends —

We are aristocrats forsooth; we lift
Our heads too high, we are too proud; a thing
Which is a shame for one in Athens born.
We should be hand and glove with every one.
Well! let us own we are too proud, at least,
To court low company; too proud to rise
By any step that treads a brother down;
Too proud to stoop to defamating arts;
Too proud to sneer, to crawl, to cringe, to lie!
And if in Athens we select our friends,
Is this forbidden to a freeman here?

So, not content with throwing stones at you,
My noble Pericles, they cast at me
Their evil scandals. 'T was impiety
Because I wrought your figure and mine own
Upon Athena's shield; then, worse than this,
Our fair Aspasia they aspersed, and slurred
My honour and your own, as well as hers.
Now, since these shafts have struck not to the white,
A grosser scandal, hoping that at last
Some mud will stick if but enough be thrown;
So Menon cries, "This sculptor whom you praise
Has stolen for his private use the gold
The state confided to him, to encrust
This statue of Athena." 'T is a lie!
An evil, wicked lie; as well you know,
My Pericles. I see it in your smile.

Yet, were it not that, with small faith in men
Like those that watch us with an evil eye,
I feared some accusation like to this
(And you yourself forewarned me of the same),
I had perchance been reft of all clear proof
Against this libel. As it is, I smile.
Each dram and scruple of the gold was weighed
'T is moveable; and in response I say,
Let it be taken off and weighed again.
If in the balance it be changed a hair,
The fault be on my head. It will not change!

Thus far, O Pericles, well though I knew
Such calumnies were whispered secretly,
I would not stoop to answer them, secure
In my own honour, scornful of the crew
That uttered them, and holding it a loss
Of simple dignity to make response.
One does not stride forth in the market-place
To vaunt one's honesty, or cry aloud
"I do not lie and steal, though curs do bark."

But here 's a public charge of theft urged home,
With show of false facts and pretended proof,
And so I speak; I ask for trial now,
Lest to the ignorant, who know me not,
Mere silence wear the false mask of consent.

But what avails it? Baffled in their aim,
They will retire a moment, to return

With some new scandal, which will creep and
crawl
At first in whispers, dark and vague, and then
Take shape, grow stronger, and at last lift up
Its public hissing head. These cunning lies
Will serve their purpose, save to honest men;
The noble and the just will stand by me;
The envious rabble cherish still the lie.
Yes; for a lie will hurry to the bound
Of twilight, scattering its noisome seed,
Ere tardy Truth can lace its sandals on
To start in chase. Besides, great Truth is proud
And confident, disdaining to pursue
Through secret drains and slums the eager lie
That loves a whispered word, a foul surmise,
And in reply to Truth's calm honest voice
Winks, hints, and shrugs its shoulders with a
laugh.
Ten thousand ears will hear the audacious lie,
One thousand to the refutation list,
Ten of ten thousand will believe stern Truth.

True, the last ten outweigh, as gold does dross,
The other thousands; but one does not like
One's clean robes to be smirched by dirt and
mud,
Even though the mud brush off. Posterity
Will do us justice? Yes, perhaps, or no.
So long as men are men 't will be the same,
Or now, or thousands of long years from now.

And it is *now* we live. Our honest fame,
To be enjoyed, must compass us about
Like ambient air we breathe — pure, without
taint.

What matters it, when I am turned to dust,
When all emotions, joys, loves, passions, hopes,
Are vanished like a breeze that dies away,
And all that I am now, — these hands, this heart,
This spirit, — nay, the very friends I own,
And all that lent this life its perfect charm,
Are past and over; ah! what matters it
What in the future men may say or do?
Whether, disputing o'er my grave, at last
They call me good or bad, honest or vile?

What joy can any verdict give me then,
When I myself, and all who love me now,
And all who hate or envy me as well,
Will be but mute insensate dust, whose ear
No word of blame can reach, no word of praise?
And yet, even then, although it matters not,
Truth, standing by my grave, I trust, will say,
Honest he was, and faithful to the last,
Above low frauds, striving for lofty ends,
Obedient to the gods, and friend to man,
Doing his work with earnest faith and will;
Not vaunting what he did, but knowing well
Perfection is impossible in Art;
Receiving with humility the praise

The world accorded, wishing well to all,
And never envious of his brother's fame.

There stands Athena, she whom Menon says
I did not make, being helped by better men,
Whose fame I thus defraud of their just rights
By claiming it as mine. What can one say
To such a paltry charge of petty fraud?
I scorn to answer it; nay, even they
Who make it know 't is false as 't is absurd.

Speak! my Athena; answer thou for me!
She will not answer, yet her silence speaks
More eloquent than any words of mine.
Look, Pericles! how calm and all unmoved
She stands and gazes at us; a half-scorn
On those still lips at these poor jealousies,
These foolish bickerings and strifes of men.
"What mean you, that you make this wicked
noise"
(She seems to say), "you creatures of an hour?
Why do you wrangle thus your life away
With your sharp lies and envious vanities,
Buzzing and stinging a brief moment's space
In Time's thin stretch across the Infinite,
Whose awful silences shall gulf you all? —
Swift evanescent flashes through the dark
Across the untroubled patience of the night,
And the still, far, unalterable stars.
Ye boasters! what is all your vaunted work

That with such pride ye build, save that the gods
Smile on you and assist you? 'T is not yours,
If any good be in it. Bend your hearts
Before the Powers august. Strive not to rob
Your fellow-mortal of the gift the gods
Bestow upon him. Humbly do the work
That is appointed, and in confidence
Await the end, secure of Nemesis."

MARCUS AURELIUS TO LUCIUS VERUS

DEDICATED TO THE LADY WILLIAM RUSSELL.

I HAVE received your letter, read it through
With careful thought, and, to confess the truth,
I deem it timid to a point beyond
What suits an Emperor, — timid in a way
Unsuited to the temper of the time.
You say Avidius hates us; does not stint
His jests and sneers at what we are and do;
Has no respect for the imperial robes;
Says you are an old woman, whose bald talk
You deem profound philosophy, while I
Am merely a debauched and studious fool.
You bear him no ill-will for this, you say,
(My noble Lucius, this is worthy you!)
But then you add you fear he has designs
To do us wrong, and beg me to keep watch,
Lest he, by all his wealth and power, at last
Compass our ruin. But consider this —
If to Avidius Destiny decree
The Empire's purple, all our art is vain!
You know the saying of your ancestor,
Our austere Trajan, "Never was there prince
Who killed his own heir;" no man e'er prevailed
Him to o'erthrow whom the immortal gods

Had marked as his successor; so, as well,
He whom the gods oppose must surely fall,
Not through our act, but by his destiny,
Caught in the inevitable snare of fate.

Again, the traitor or the criminal,
Though by the clearest proof convicted, stands
As 't were at bay; one weak and friendless man
Against the state's compacted law and might,
And thus moves pity — seeming, as it were,
From that unequal match to suffer wrong.
"Wretched, indeed" (as your grandfather said),
"The fate of princes who make good their charge
Of purposed murder by their martyrdom,
Proving the plot against their life, by death."
Domitian 't was, in truth, who spake these words,
Yet rather would I call them Hadrian's,
Since tyrants' sayings, true howe'er they be,
Have not the weight of good and noble men's.

As for Avidius, then, let him work out
His secret course, being, as you say he is,
Austere in discipline, a leader brave,
And one the state cannot afford to lose;
Let him continue there upon the edge
Of Daphnic luxury, near by Antioch,
To rein the army in and hold it firm,
Secure that Nemesis awaits on him,
As on us all, whate'er we are or do:
And for my children's interests, and mine,

If they can only be subserved by wrong,
Perish my children, rather than through wrong
They triumph! If Avidius deserve
Better than they, and if through him the state
Glory and strength superior may gain,
Better he live and win the prize he seeks!
Better they die and yield to him the state!

Please God, that while the imperial robes I wear
No blood be shed for me, — for I would fain
Be called "The Bloodless," like our Antonine!
And if this man have injured me, and shown
Ingratitude, that meanest of all sins,
At least he cannot rob me of one boon
I hold the greatest given by victory,
That of forgiveness. Ever since the Fates
Placed me upon the throne, two aims have I
Kept fixed before my eyes; and they are these: —
Not to revenge me on my enemies,
And not to be ungrateful to my friends.

GIROLAMO, DETTO IL FIORENTINO, DESPONDS AND ABUSES THE WORLD.

"Mi dici che sono famoso e che tutti mi lodano. Ah! caro amico mio, qual valore ha ciò che si chiama successo in questo mondo? L'alto frutto che stentiamo tanto a cogliere, che ci lusinga tanto colla sua bella apparenza spesso in bocca sembra insipido, immaturo, od aspro. E poi, la Fama viene troppo tardi! Son vecchio e non mi fido più a belle parole. Grata sarebbe stata la lode del mondo quando ero giovane, m'avrebbe consolato, rinforzato, spronato ad alte imprese, come lo squillo della tromba che eccita al conflitto, che promette vittoria. Ma ora le illusioni, le speranze sono fuggite ed il reverbero della Fama non mi pare che un rumore vano ed insulso. I cari son morti e non possono udirlo; e per me poco me ne curo. Quel che ho fatto, ho fatto e lo conto per poco. Tutte le lusinghe del mondo non cambierebbero il mio giudizio. L'albero ha portato il suo frutto, e buono o cattivo rimane quello che è." — *Lettera inedita di Girolamo.*

Success, ah yes, success, you say I 've gained!
The world applauds, and yet I only sigh.
Its loud applause but feeds my vanity;
The jewel that I sought is not attained.
Something there was which once the future had —
A foolish hope, an idle dream, a light
That shone before me ever day and night —
That now is gone, and leaves me poor and sad.
'T was not to win the fickle world's applause:
That followed after as effect, not cause;
And between that and this you call success

How vast a void! Something I dreamed to do,
The joy of which should light my being through
With a serene interior happiness.
So strove I with the toil of brain and heart,
Saying, "Into the inner sphere of art
When I have pierced and made me master there,
The toil all over, I shall stand and bear
Sound fruit, sweet blossoms, like a healthy tree
That hath the winds of heaven for playmates
free,
A rest and refuge for the head of care."

What now is come instead? This glorious star
Turns out to be a common, vulgar lamp —
A false marsh-meteor dancing o'er the damp,
Low stretch of blasted life; this godlike Lar
A brazen cheat; this fair Hesperian fruit
A Dead Sea apple; and the siren's lute
Strung to such discord it were better mute.

Once by the shore I mused and saw afar
A dream-like bark, that o'er the morning sea,
Through veiled and violet distances of air,
With roseate sails went gliding silently;
Freighted with bliss, to some ideal land
Its happy peaceful way it seemed to wend.
And there I longed — oh, how I longed to be!
Now on its filthy deck at last I stand:
Oh, dismal disenchantment, bitter end!
Soiled are its sails, the sea is rough and high,

Foul are the odors, coarse the company;
And sick at stomach and at heart I lie,
And curse my fate and wish that I could die.

The world has cured me of my self-conceit;
Its cold rebuffs have brushed away like dust
My youth's presumptuous faith and proud self-trust.
What do I care if they were all a cheat,
Those bright illusions of my early years?
While I believed that I was strong, I was;
Self-conscious, now, I look around and pause,
Hindered in all I do by doubts and fears.

Success! Yes, while you stinted me in praise
My pride upheld me; to myself I said,
"Some time they 'll praise me, after I am dead.
The work is good, although the world delays;
I for the prize can wait." But now you blow
The trumpet in my honour, I bend low,
And from my eyes my work's best charm has fled.
Once I compared it with the world's neglect,
And proudly said, "'Tis better than they see."
Now I behold it tainted with defect
In the broad light of what it ought to be.

Fame seemed, when out of reach, how sweet and grand!
How worthless, now I grasp it in my hand!

The glory was the struggle, the affray;
Victory is only loss; at last I stand
Mourning amid dead hopes at close of day.
Give me the old enthusiasms back,
Give me the ardent longings that I lack, —
The glorious dreams that fooled me in my youth,
The sweet mirage that lured me on its track, —
And take away the bitter, barren truth.
Ah, yes! Success, I fear, has come too late!
Once it had swelled my heart and filled my sails;
Now I am reefed, it only cries and wails
In my rent cordage like a blast of fate.
The lift is gone, the spring is strained and weak;
I scorn the praise yon idle praisers speak.
What matters now the lauding of your lips,
What matters now the laurel wreath you plait
For these bald brows, for these gray hairs? It slips
Over my eyes and helps to hide my tears.
I am too old for joys — almost for fears.

Ye critics, pardon, that I dared to do
Not as you wished, but only as I chose.
You might have done far better, it is true,
And perfumed my camellia like a rose.
Oh, had you wrought my crippled works yourselves,
They had been giants which are now but elves!

Do we not feel as well our works' defect
As you who circling round them hum and sing,
Mosquito critics with a poisonous sting;
Or ye whose higher purpose 't is to teach,
Who kindly patronize, suggest, direct,
And make our labours texts on which to preach
And show your own superior intellect?
Do we not know our work is mean and poor?
'T is only when the fire is in the brain,
And all alone we strive — the outward door
Of life closed up — and listen as to one
Speaking within us with a spirit's tone,
That what we do seems not entirely vain.
Waking from that half-trance of inner thought,
The voices gone, the real world returned,
We feel the thing that we have done is naught —
A blackened brand with all the flame outburned,
A goblet cracked which all its wine hath shed,
A cage in which the singing bird is dead.

This was my hope and trust, when I am gone,
Dead, turned to dust, senseless to blame or praise,
That somewhat out of all that I had sown
Of thought and feeling on the world's highways
Might not be held as base and noxious weeds
For Time with hand unsparing to destroy,
But, falling on some kindly soil, the seeds
Might grow and bloom into a moment's joy,
Or ripen into fruit of noble deeds.

This lent me life, and strung my throbbing strings
To music once. What joy 't would be to feel
My song into some maiden's heart might steal
And live amid her pure imaginings, —
That she should keep it in her memory
As handmaid to her love, and breathe it low,
And pour into it all the overflow
Of her young heart and say it with a sigh;
Or that some student in despairing hour
Should from a word of mine renew his power;
Some toiling heart be strengthened in its aim;
Some faltering purpose trample down its shame;
Some eye, long used to poring on the ground,
Look up and feel the sky and beauty round;
Some sorrowing mourner get a glimpse of youth;
Some world-cased spirit feel the sting of truth.
Is this so now? You say it is, and yet
It does not stir me now; the fountain's jet
But dribbles o'er the worn-out pipes, where first
Its shattered showers of diamonds towering burst.

Autumn has come; the grass is dry and sere;
No spring-time flowers now grace the dying year.
The fruits are nearly culled; the harsh winds blight
The lingering leaves. I only linger here,
And the time comes for me to say good-night.

Yes, I am sad — sad and dispirited,
And those I loved and laboured for are dead.
The heart is hardened, once so sensitive.
Fame the world gives, but youth it cannot give;
Nor can it give me back the smiles of those
Whose praise had been the best reward on earth.
Success but makes me feel the dreadful dearth,
The gap of death that naught can ever close.
Midst all the voices one — the dearest one —
I miss to greet me now my work is done.
The hand that would so gladly on my brow
Have placed the laurel that you bring too late,
And kissed the lips below, — where is it now?
What do I care that now you call me great;
Is this the triumph, this the happiness?
Cry to the dead ones, "He hath won success."
Say, will their voices answer back to bless?

Yet courage! this is but an idle mood;
To-morrow I shall feel within my blood
A new pulse beating, a new impulse start.
'T is but a cloud to-day comes o'er my heart,
A sickening sense of weakness, where desire
Hath only left the ashes of its fire.
Art still remains, and wheresoe'er I be
It draws me with a sweet necessity.
Though in a moment's rage I storm and frown,
And with a rude hand cast its altars down,
Or, disappointed and depressed with care,
Heed not the perfume of the incense there,

A better mood will come, when I again
Shall seek its temple, worship in its train,
Put on my coronal, and be its priest,
Glad to perform the duty that is least.
For what were life without its joys and fears,
Its tumults, and its clash of smiles and tears?
What could I do, forbade to enter in
Its happy courts, but sit without and weep?
No! the old use will never let me sleep,
And, poor as all my service yet hath been,
While life continues in this breast to beat,
A space to struggle and a prize to win
Will still remain. Oh, not alone a name,
Though human praise to human ears is sweet,
Allures me. Something higher far I claim,
To shape out something that I shall not shame
To lay upon art's shrine as offering meet;
Something in which the strength of age shall be,
And youth's high hope be made reality.

So! still the same; these years have nothing taught;
Still the enthusiast! Even while I spoke
Elastic springs the hope I thought was broke.
I am a child still. Oh, thank Heaven! not all,
Despite the world's rebuffs and what you call
Success, not all is lost and turned to naught!
There 's tinder yet which can be set on fire
When the chance sparks of feeling on it fall.

I have not stood a beggar on the ways
And held my hand out for the critic's praise;
I have not flattered, fawned, nor coined my heart,
Degraded the high purposes of art,
Pandered to vulgar aims and groveling thought;
And if success has come, it comes unbought.
Art shall not drag her skirts along the mud
While I can help her; shall not beg and cringe,
Claim alms for pity's sake, her heaven-born blood
Ceasing with noble pride her cheeks to tinge.
I have not cast her alms, but on my knees
Been thankful for the crust she threw to me,
Me, her poor worshiper, most glad to be
Her humblest slave; glad if by slow degrees
I win one smile at last my life to bless,
And this alone for me would be success.

PORTRAITS AND PERSONS.

PAN IN LOVE.

Stop running more. You must — indeed you shall.
See how your feet are hurt. Your breath comes fast
And all in vain. Light as you are, you see
I can outrun you, and these briers and brakes
That tear your tender feet will never harm
My horny hoofs. Why do you fly from me?
I mean no ill. Stop. Rest upon this bank,
Soft with green mosses, sprinkled with quaint flowers,
And listen to me while you get your breath.
Bacchus is in the distant vale, so far
His cymbals scarcely reach us — far away
Silenus and his rout — they 'll never hear
Though you should scream with all your little voice.
I am a coarse, rough fellow, but I love
Such smooth, white-limbed, soft-footed things as you.
What shall I do to make you love me back,
And twine those arms around this hairy neck?
What shall I give you for a kiss? Come, sit
On these rough shaggy knees, and smooth my cheeks

With your soft hands. Bacchus is fairer far;
But he, the fickle, vain, conceited god,
Loves but himself, and changes every hour
For some new fancy. I will be more true,
And love forever. Ah! we ugly gods
Alone are constant, and that Venus knew
When she preferred to all the dandy crew
Stern, black, old Vulcan.

Oh! dear little feet!
Dear little hands, so rosy, tapering, slight.
See, how they look against these hands and hoofs,
That never will be tired to work for you.

Nay! if you will not sit upon my knee,
Lie on that bank, and listen while I play
A sylvan song upon these reedy pipes.
In the full moonrise as I lay last night
Under the alders on Peneus' banks,
Dabbling my hoofs in the cool stream, that welled
Wine-dark with gleamy ripples round their roots,
I made the song the while I shaped the pipes.
'T is all of you and love, as you shall hear.
The drooping lilies, as I sang it, heaved
Upon their broad green leaves, and underneath,
Swift silvery fishes, poised on quivering fins,
Hung motionless to listen; in the grass
The crickets ceased to shrill their tiny bells;
And even the nightingale, that all the eve

Hid in the grove's deep green, had throbbed and thrilled,
Paused in his strain of love to list to mine.
Bacchus is handsome, but such songs as this
He cannot shape, and better loves the clash
Of brazen cymbals than my reedy pipes.
Fair as he is without, he 's coarse within —
Gross in his nature, loving noise and wine;
And, tipsy, half the time goes reeling round,
Leaning on old Silenus' shoulders fat.
But I have scores of songs that no one knows,
Not even Apollo, no, nor Mercury —
Their strings can never sing like my sweet pipes —
Some, that will make fierce tigers rub their fur
Against the oak-trunks for delight, or stretch
Their flat sides for my pillow on the sward.
Some, that will make the satyrs' clattering hoofs
Leap when they hear, and from their noonday dreams
Start up to stamp a wild and frolic dance
In the green shadows. Ay! and better songs,
Made for the delicate nice ears of nymphs,
Which while I sing my pipes shall imitate
The droning bass of honey-seeking bees,
The tinkling tenor of clear pebbly streams,
The breezy alto of the alders' sighs,
And all the airy sounds that lull the grove
When noon falls fast asleep among the hills.
Not only these, — for I can pipe to you

Songs that will make the slippery vipers pause,
And stay the stags to gaze with their great eyes;
Such songs — and you shall hear them, if you will —
That Bacchus' self would give his hide to hear.

If you 'll but love me, every day I 'll bring
The coyest flowers, such as you never saw,
To deck you with. I know their secret nooks —
They cannot hide themselves away from Pan.
And you shall have rare garlands; and your bed
Of fragrant mosses shall be sprinkled o'er
With violets like your eyes — just for a kiss.
Love me, and you shall do whate'er you like,
And shall be tended wheresoe'er you go,
And not a beast shall hurt you — not a toad
But at your bidding give his jewel up.
The speckled shining snakes shall never bite,
But twist like bracelets round your rosy arms,
And keep your bosom cool in the hot noon.
You shall have berries ripe of every kind,
And luscious peaches, and wild nectarines,
And sun-flecked apricots, and honeyed dates,
And wine from bee-stung grapes drunk with the sun
(Such wine as Bacchus never tasted yet).
And not a poisonous plant shall have the power
To tetter your white flesh, if you 'll love Pan.
And then I 'll tell you tales that no one knows;
Of what the pines talk in the summer nights

When far above you hear them murmuring
As they sway whispering to the lifting breeze —
And what the storm shrieks to the struggling oaks
As it flies through them hurrying to the sea
From mountain crags and cliffs. Or, when you 're sad,
I 'll tell you tales that solemn cypresses
Have murmured to me. There 's not anything
Hid in the woods and dales and dark ravines,
Shadowed in dripping caves, or by the shore,
Slipping from sight, but I can tell to you.
Plump, dull-eared Bacchus, thinking of himself,
Never can catch a syllable of this;
But with my shaggy ear against the grass
I hear the secrets hidden underground,
And know how in the inner forge of Earth,
The pulse-like hammers of creation beat.
Old Pan is ugly, rough, and rude to see,
But no one knows such secrets as old Pan.
What shall I give you for a kiss? I must,
Will have it. See, these iris-colored shells,
So curiously veined with gleamy pearl —
Rare shells, that Venus covets, and would give
A thousand kisses for — shall all be yours; —
And these great pearls too, and red coral beads,
Worn round by the smooth sea, — you shall have all.
Strung on your neck, and, rolling there between
Your budding breasts, how pretty they will look!

Do not refuse old Pan one kiss. By Zeus,
How beautiful this soft and waving hair
(Not like my bristling curls)! — how it creeps
round
Your shining shoulders, by the zephyr stirred,
As if it loved them! I can scarcely keep
My fingers from those shoulders' sweeps and
curves.
My arms desire to clasp that lithe slight waist.
One kiss — one kiss — I will — nay, throw not
back
That chin and throat, and, with that rosy mouth,
Laugh as you push me off. I must — I will.
You make me mad. My very fingers itch.
Come, or I 'll butt my head against this tree,
And poor old Pan's pipes will be heard no more.
Don't laugh at me, and kick me in the breast
With those white feet; I 'll bite them if you do!
You wilful minx, have pity on old Pan —
Have pity, or I 'll seize you round the waist,
And, whether you will or not, I 'll have my kiss.

CLEOPATRA.

DEDICATED TO J. L. M.

HERE, Charmian, take my bracelets,
They bar with a purple stain
My arms; turn over my pillows —
They are hot where I have lain:
Open the lattice wider,
A gauze on my bosom throw,
And let me inhale the odours
That over the garden blow.

I dreamed I was with my Antony,
And in his arms I lay;
Ah, me! the vision has vanished —
The music has died away.
The flame and the perfume have perished —
As this spiced aromatic pastille
That wound the blue smoke of its odour
Is now but an ashy hill.

Scatter upon me rose-leaves,
They cool me after my sleep,
And with sandal odours fan me
Till into my veins they creep;

Reach down the lute, and play me
A melancholy tune,
To rhyme with the dream that has vanished,
And the slumbering afternoon.

There, drowsing in golden sunlight,
Loiters the slow smooth Nile,
Through slender papyri, that cover
The wary crocodile.
The lotus lolls on the water,
And opens its heart of gold,
And over its broad leaf-pavement
Never a ripple is rolled.
The twilight breeze is too lazy
Those feathery palms to wave,
And yon little cloud is as motionless
As a stone above a grave.

Ah, me! this lifeless nature
Oppresses my heart and brain!
Oh! for a storm and thunder —
For lightning and wild fierce rain!
Fling down that lute — I hate it!
Take rather his buckler and sword,
And crash them and clash them together
Till this sleeping world is stirred.

Hark! to my Indian beauty —
My cockatoo, creamy white,
With roses under his feathers —
That flashes across the light.

Look! listen! as backward and forward
To his hoop of gold he clings,
How he trembles, with crest uplifted,
And shrieks as he madly swings!
Oh, cockatoo, shriek for Antony!
Cry, "Come, my love, come home!"
Shriek, "Antony! Antony! Antony!"
Till he hears you even in Rome.

There — leave me, and take from my chamber
That stupid little gazelle,
With its bright black eyes so meaningless,
And its silly tinkling bell!
Take him, — my nerves he vexes, —
The thing without blood or brain, —
Or, by the body of Isis,
I 'll snap his thin neck in twain!

Leave me to gaze at the landscape
Mistily stretching away,
Where the afternoon's opaline tremors
O'er the mountains quivering play;
Till the fiercer splendour of sunset
Pours from the west its fire,
And melted, as in a crucible,
Their earthy forms expire;
And the bald blear skull of the desert
With glowing mountains is crowned,
That burning like molten jewels
Circle its temples round.

I will lie and dream of the past time,
Æons of thought away,
And through the jungle of memory
Loosen my fancy to play;
When, a smooth and velvety tiger,
Ribbed with yellow and black,
Supple and cushion-footed
I wandered, where never the track
Of a human creature had rustled
The silence of mighty woods,
And, fierce in a tyrannous freedom,
I knew but the law of my moods.
The elephant, trumpeting, started,
When he heard my footstep near,
And the spotted giraffes fled wildly
In a yellow cloud of fear.
I sucked in the noontide splendour,
Quivering along the glade,
Or yawning, panting, and dreaming,
Basked in the tamarisk shade,
Till I heard my wild mate roaring,
As the shadows of night came on,
To brood in the trees' thick branches
And the shadow of sleep was gone;
Then I roused, and roared in answer,
And unsheathed from my cushioned feet
My curving claws, and stretched me,
And wandered my mate to greet.
We toyed in the amber moonlight,
Upon the warm flat sand,

And struck at each other our massive arms —
How powerful he was and grand!
His yellow eyes flashed fiercely
As he crouched and gazed at me,
And his quivering tail, like a serpent,
Twitched curving nervously.
Then like a storm he seized me,
With a wild triumphant cry,
And we met, as two clouds in heaven
When the thunders before them fly.
We grappled and struggled together,
For his love like his rage was rude;
And his teeth in the swelling folds of my neck
At times, in our play, drew blood.

Often another suitor —
For I was flexile and fair —
Fought for me in the moonlight,
While I lay couching there,
Till his blood was drained by the desert;
And, ruffled with triumph and power,
He licked me and lay beside me
To breathe him a vast half-hour.
Then down to the fountain we loitered,
Where the antelopes came to drink;
Like a bolt we sprang upon them,
Ere they had time to shrink,
We drank their blood and crushed them,
And tore them limb from limb,
And the hungriest lion doubted
Ere he disputed with him.

That was a life to live for!
Not this weak human life,
With its frivolous bloodless passions,
Its poor and petty strife!

Come to my arms, my hero,
The shadows of twilight grow,
And the tiger's ancient fierceness
In my veins begins to flow.
Come not cringing to sue me!
Take me with triumph and power,
As a warrior storms a fortress!
I will not shrink or cower.
Come, as you came in the desert,
Ere we were women and men,
When the tiger passions were in us,
And love as you loved me then!

MARCUS ANTONIUS.

DEDICATED TO L. C.

'T is vain, Fonteus! — As the half-tamed steed,
Scenting the desert, lashes madly out,
And strains and storms and struggles to be freed,
Shaking his rattling harness all about —
So, fiercer for restraint, here in my breast
Hot passion rages, firing every thought;
For what is honour, prudence, interest,
To the wild strength of love? Oh best of life,
My joy, hope, triumph, glory, my soul's wife,
My Cleopatra! I desire thee so
That all restraint to the wild winds I throw.
Come what come will, come life, come death, to me,
'T is equal, if again I look on thee.
Away, Fonteus! tell her that I rage
With madness for her. Nothing can assuage
The strong desire, the torment, the fierce stress
That whirls my thoughts round, and inflames my brain,
But her great ardent eyes — dark eyes, that draw
My being to them with a subtle law
And an almost divine imperiousness.

Tell her I do not live until I feel
The thrill of her wild touch, that through each vein
Electric shoots its lightning; and again
Hear those low tones of hers, although they steal
As by some serpent-charm my will away,
And wreck my manhood.

Ah! Octavia,
This lying galls me — this poor mean pretense
Of love — this putting every word to school —
When all at best is blank indifference.
Even hate for you is only cold and dull —
I hate you that I cannot hate you more,
Were you but savage, wicked to the core,
Less pious, prudish, prudent, made to rule,
I might have loved or hated more; but now
Nothing on earth seems half so deadly chill
As your insipid smile and placid brow,
Your glacial goodness and proprieties.

Tell my dear serpent I must see her — fill
My eyes with the glad light of her great eyes,
Though death, dishonour, anything you will,
Stand in the way! Ay, by my soul! disgrace
Is better in the sun of Egypt's face
Than pomp or power in this detested place.
Oh for the wine my queen alone can pour
From her rich nature! Let me starve no more
On this weak tepid drink that never warms

My life-blood : but away with shams and forms !
Away with Rome ! One hour in Egypt's eyes
Is worth a score of Roman centuries.
Away, Fonteus ! Tell her, till I see
Those eyes I do not live — that Rome to me
Is hateful, — tell her — oh ! I know not what —
That every thought and feeling, space and spot,
Is like an ugly dream, where she is not ;
All persons plagues ; all living wearisome ;
All talking empty ; all these feasts and friends —
These slaves and courtiers, princes, palaces —
This Cæsar, with his selfish aims and ends,
His oily ways and sleek hypocrisies —
This Lepidus ; all this dull Roman brood,
And worst of all Octavia, the cold prude,
With her meek manners and her voice subdued —
Are bonds and fetters, tedious as disease,
Not worth the parings of her finger-nails.

Oh for the breath of Egypt ! — the soft nights
Of the voluptuous East — the dear delights
We tasted there — the lotus-perfumed gales
That dream along the low shores of the Nile,
And softly flutter in the languid sails !
Oh for the queen of all ! — for the rich smile
That glows like autumn over her dark face —
For her large nature — her enchanting grace —
Her arms, that are away so many a mile !
Away, Fonteus ! — lose no hour — make sail —
Weigh anchor on the instant — woo a gale

To blow you to her. Tell her I shall be
Close on your very heels across the sea,
Praying that Neptune send me storms as strong
As Passion is, to sweep me swift along,
Till the white spray sing whistling round my prow,
And the waves gurgle 'neath the keel's sharp plough.
Fly, fly, Fonteus! When I think of her
My soul within my body is astir!
My wild blood pulses, and my hot cheeks glow!
Love with its madness overwhelms me so
That I — oh! go, I say! Fonteus, go!

CASSANDRA.[1]

DEDICATED TO H. C.

WHY didst thou lift the veil, beloved one,
Divine Apollo, from these human eyes?
The phantom forms that from the Future rise
Appall me; all in vain I seek to shun
This fatal knowledge; horror-struck to see
The shadowy shapes of coming destiny
Steal forth unsummoned fierce with death and hate,
But powerless to avert the doom of Fate.
Ah! better blindness, better night, dark night!
Better dead loss of that supreme delight,
Thy love! better the worst that Time conceals
Than all the coming horrors it reveals.
Shroud me again in darkness — close the door
Of the dread Future — torture me no more
With these foul shapes of visionary crime —
These murders that stare through the veil of time, —
These horrors — drive these fearful sights away,

[1] A chronological license has been taken in this poem, which it is hoped will be pardoned in view of the mythical character of the period.

Or give me power the coming crime to stay.
Only in ignorance is joy; to rest
In blind fond trust upon the Present's breast.
'T is worse than death, far worse, to see, to know;
Take back the gift! We creatures here below
Need all our blindness, need the mortal veil
Which shuts the Future out, obscures the sense,
And hides us from our Fate. Not too much light
May man endure. Pure Truth is too intense,
It blinds us. Perfect Love at its full height
Kills with excess of rapture. We are made
With human senses, and we all need here
Illusions, veils, a tempering atmosphere,
And ignorance to shield us with its shade.
The Gods in heaven may see and know, nor fear
The face of Fate, serene, beyond all care;
But when to us poor mortals they appear,
Around your glory they a veil must wear,
Or who could look and live? And so to me
Divinest of the Gods you came; too bright
For all your mortal veil, suffused with light,
Radiant with splendours of divinity.

Ah! what a price for Love I paid! No more,
Since that dread gift, the peace, the tranquil bliss
That once in my unburdened heart I bore!
No more the careless thoughtless happiness,
The maiden hope, the unreasoning faith, the scent
Of vague sweet feelings making redolent

The inmost chambers of my life ; 't is o'er —
Fled — vanished. The soft veil is rent away.
Where'er I set my feet on the green grass
'T is stained with blood. The glory of the day
Is darkened with foul crimes. The shapes that pass
Before my scared and visionary eyes
No more are gentle dreams, but ghosts that rise
And mock and threaten from the unopened tomb
Of the black Future, and with voice of doom,
Faint, dim, but horrible, dismay my soul.

Hark ! as I speak — those voices — that fierce jar —
That murmurous tumult hurrying from afar —
What means it ? Close my eyes, my ears control !
They come, still nearer, up the sounding stair.
What horror now is brooding o'er this place ?
What dreadful crime ? What does Medea there
In that dim chamber ? See on her dark face
And serpent brow, rage, fury, love, despair !
What seeks she ? There her children are at play
Laughing and talking. Not so fierce, I say,
You scare them with that passionate embrace !
Hark to those footsteps in the hall — the loud
Clear voice of Jason heard above the crowd.
Why does she push them now so stern away
And listening glance around, — then fixed and mute,

Her brow shut down, her mouth irresolute,
Her thin hands twitching at her robes the while,
As with some fearful purpose does she stand?
Why that triumphant glance — that hideous smile —
That poniard hidden in her mantle there,
That through the dropping folds now darts its gleam?
O Gods! O, all ye Gods! hold back her hand.
Spare them! oh spare them! O, Medea, spare!
You will not, dare not! ah, that sharp shrill scream!
Ah! — the red blood — 't is trickling down the floor!
Help! help! oh, hide me! Let me see no more!

ORESTES.

How tranquil is the night! how calm and deep
This sacred silence! Not an olive-leaf
Is stirring on the slopes; all is asleep —
All silent, save the distant drowsy streams
That down the hill-sides murmur in their dreams.
The vast sad sky all breathless broods above,
And peace and rest this solemn temple steep.
Here let us rest — it is the hour of love —
Forgetting human pain and human grief.

But see! half-hidden in the columned shade,
Who panting stands, with hollow eyes dismayed,
That glance around as if they feared to see
Some dreaded shape pursuing? Can it be
Orestes, with those cheeks so trenched and worn —
That brow with sorrow seamed, that face forlorn?
Ay, 't is Orestes! we are not alone.
What human place is free from human groan?
Ay, 't is Orestes! In the temple there,
Refuge he seeks from horror, from despair.
Look! where he listens, dreading still to hear
The avenging voices sounding in his ear —
The awful voices that, by day and night,

Pursue relentless his despairing flight.
Ah! vain the hope to flee from Nemesis!
He starts — again he hears the horrent hiss
Of the fierce Furies through the darkness creep.
And list! along the aisles the angry sweep,
The hurrying rush of trailing robes — as when,
Through shivering pines asleep in some dim glen,
Fierce Auster whispers. Yes, even here they chase
Their haunted victim — even this sacred place
Stays not their fatal footsteps. As they come,
Behold him with that stricken face of doom
Fly to the altar, and there falling prone,
Strike with his brow Apollo's feet of stone.
"Save me!" he cries; "Apollo! hear and save;
Not even the dead will sleep in their dark grave.
They come — the Furies! To this tortured breast
Not even night, the calm, the peaceful, can give rest.
Stretch forth thy hand, great God! and bid them cease.
Peace, O Apollo! give the victim peace!"

See! the white arm above him seems to wave,
And all at once is silent as the grave,
And Sleep stoops down with noiseless wings outspread,
And brooding hovers o'er Orestes' head;
And like a gust that roars along the plain

Seaward, and dies far off, so dies the pain,
The deep remorse, that long his life hath stung,
And he again is guiltless, joyous, young.
Again he plays, as in the olden time,
Through the cool marble halls, unstained by crime.
Hope holds his hands, Joy strikes the sounding strings,
Love o'er him fluttering shakes his purple wings,
And Sorrow hides her face, and dark Death creeps
Into the shade, and every Fury sleeps.

Sleep! sleep, Orestes! let thy torments cease!
Sleep! great Apollo grants thy prayer for peace.
Sleep! while the dreams of youth around thee play,
And the fierce Furies rest. — Let *us* away.

PRAXITELES AND PHRYNE.

DEDICATED TO R. B.

A THOUSAND silent years ago,
The twilight faint and pale
Was drawing o'er the sunset glow
Its soft and shadowy veil;

When from his work the Sculptor stayed
His hand, and turned to one
Who stood beside him, half in shade,
Said, with a sigh, "'T is done.

"Thus much is saved from chance and change,
That waits for me and thee;
Thus much — how little! — from the range
Of Death and Destiny.

"Phryne, thy human lips shall pale,
Thy rounded limbs decay, —
Nor love nor prayers can aught avail
To bid thy beauty stay;

"But there thy smile for centuries
On marble lips shall live, —
For Art can grant what Love denies,
And fix the fugitive.

"Sad thought! nor age nor death shall fade
The youth of this cold bust;
When this quick brain and hand that made,
And thou and I art dust!

"When all our hopes and fears are dead,
And both our hearts are cold,
And love is like a tune that 's played,
And life a tale that 's told,

"This senseless stone, so coldly fair,
That love nor life can warm,
The same enchanting look shall wear,
The same enchanting form.

"Its peace no sorrow shall destroy;
Its beauty age shall spare
The bitterness of vanished joy,
The wearing waste of care.

"And there upon that silent face
Shall unborn ages see
Perennial youth, perennial grace,
And sealed serenity.

"And strangers, when we sleep in peace,
Shall say, not quite unmoved,
'So smiled upon Praxiteles
The Phryne whom he loved!'"

CHERSIPHRON.

When to their utmost we have tasked our powers,
And Nemesis still frowns and shakes her head;
When, wearied out and baffled, we confess
Our utter weakness, and the tired hand drops,
And Hope flees from us, and in blank despair
We sink to earth, the face so stern before
August will smile — the hand before withdrawn
Reach out the help we vainly plead for,
Take up our task, and in a moment do
What all our strength was powerless to achieve.

Unless the Gods smile, human toil is vain.
The crowning blessing of all work is drawn
Not from ourselves, but from the powers above.

And this none better knew then Chersiphron,
When on the plains of Ephesus he reared
The splendid temple built to Artemis.

With patient labour he had placed at last
The solid jambs on either side the door, —
And now for many a weary day he strove
With many a plan and many a fresh device,
Still seeking and still failing, on these jambs

Level to lay the lintel's massive weight.
Still it defied him, — and worn out at last,
Along the steps he laid him down at night.
Sleep would not come. With dull distracting pain
The problem hunted through his feverish thoughts,
Till in his dark despair he longed for Death,
And threatened his own life with his own hand.

Peace came at last upon him — and he slept;
And in his sleep before his dreaming eyes
He saw the form divine of Artemis:
O'er him she bent, and smiled, and softly said,
"Live, Chersiphron! Who labour for the Gods,
The Gods reward. Behold, your work is done!"

Then, like a mist that melts into the sky,
She vanished — and awaking, he beheld,
Laid by her hand above the entrance-door,
The ponderous lintel level on the jambs.

TANTALUS.

I AT the banquet of the Gods have sate
Above the clouds that shroud these earthly plains,
Their nectar quaffed, and their ambrosia ate,
And felt the Olympian ichor in my veins.

Apollo, like a glory in a gloom,
Jove's thund'rous brow, and Juno's face serene,
Chaste Dian's grace, — the auroral blush and bloom
That Venus owns, — these mortal eyes have seen.

Mad with desire I strove the charm to seize
That should again renew to sense and soul
On earth below those heavenly ecstasies —
And I their nectar and ambrosia stole.

But who against the Gods shall e'er prevail?
The bliss of heaven on earth we may not own,
Stale tastes the nectar here, the ambrosia stale,
The ethereal flavor lost, the aroma flown.

And so the Gods condemn me here to stand
Thirsting within the stream that from me flees, —

Hungering 'mid fruits ambrosial that my hand
Forever vainly reaches out to seize.

My sense the music of Apollo haunts,
But dim and distant and beyond my reach;
I hear afar the Gods' grand utterance
But cannot shape it into mortal speech.

In silence still I feel as in a dream
Their dim mysterious whisperings everywhere, —
On the lone hills, — in forest, reed, and stream, —
In night's low breathings, in the sea's despair.

So taunting ever with half-confidence
That wins the listening ear, but will not speak,
Pleasing and puzzling all the soul and sense,
The Gods forever mock us mortals weak.

O Poets, in whatever realm or clime,
Pity me — Tantalus — for you must feel
How nature lures us on with dreams sublime,
And hints the secret she will ne'er reveal.

PADRE BANDELLI PROSES TO THE DUKE LUDOVICO SFORZA ABOUT LEONARDO DA VINCI.

Two steps, your Highness — let me go before,
And let some light down this dark corridor;
Ser Leonardo keeps the only key
To the main entrance here so jealously,
That we must creep in at this secret door
If we his great Cenacolo would see.

The work shows talent — *that* I must confess;
The heads, too, are expressive, every one;
But, with his idling and fastidiousness,
I fear his picture never will be done.
I pray your Highness' pardon for my zeal —
Were it for sake of us poor Frati here,
Despite the inconvenience we must feel,
Kept out from our refectory now a year
And eight long months (though that, of course, for us
Whose lives to mortify the flesh are vowed,
Even to mention seems ridiculous) —
Were it for us alone, we all had bowed;
But when we see your Highness set at nought,
Who ordered this great picture to be wrought,
We cannot rest content, for well we know

What duty to our gracious prince we owe.
And I, the unworthy prior here — (God knows
How much I feel my own unworthiness,
But *He* hath power the meanest hand to bless;
And if our convent prospereth in aught,
Not mine, but *His*, the praise, who all bestows) —
But being the prior and the head, and so
Charged to your interests, and theirs, I thought
My duty — an unpleasant one, in sooth —
Was simply to acquaint you with the truth,
And pray your Highness with your eyes to see
How things go on in our refectory;
And then your Highness only has to say
Unto this painter — "Sir, no more delay!"
And all is done, for you he must obey.

'T is twenty months since first upon the wall
This Leonardo smoothed his plaster; then
He spent two months ere he began to scrawl
His figures, which were scarcely outlined, when,
Seized by some mad whim, he erased them all.
As he began the first month that he came,
So he went on, month after month the same.
At times, when he had worked from morn to night
For weeks and weeks on some apostle's head,
In one hour, as it were from sudden spite,
He 'd wipe it out. When I remonstrated,
Saying, "Ser Leonardo, you erase
More than you leave — that 's not the way to paint;

Before you finish we shall all be dead;"
Smiling, he turns (he has a pleasant face,
Though he would try the patience of a saint
With all his wilful ways), and calmly said,
"I wiped it out because it was not right;
I wish it had been, for your sake, no less
Than for this pious convent's; and indeed,
The simple truth, good Padre, to confess,
I 've not the least objection to succeed:
But I must please myself as well as you,
Since I must answer for the work I do."

There was St. John's head: *that* I verily thought
He 'd never finish. Twenty times at least
I thought it done, but still he wrought and wrought,
Defaced, remade, until at last he ceased
To work at all — went off and locked the door —
Was gone three days — then came and sat before
The picture full an hour — then calmly rose
And scratched out in a trice mouth, eyes, and nose.
This is sheer folly, as it seems to me,
Or worse than folly. Does your Highness pay
A fixed sum to him — so much every day?
If so, the reason 's very clear to see.
No? Then his brain *is* touched assuredly.

At last, however, as you see, 't is done —
All but our Lord's head, and the Judas there.

A month ago he finished the St. John,
And has not touched it since, that I 'm aware ;
And now, he neither seems to think or care
About the rest, but wanders up and down
The cloistered gallery in his long dark gown,
Picking the black stones out to step upon ;
Or through the garden paces listlessly
With eyes fixed on the ground, hour after hour,
While now and then he stoops and picks a flower,
And smells it, as it were, abstractedly.
What he is doing is a plague to me!
Sometimes he stands before yon orange-pot,
His hands behind him, just as if he saw
Some curious thing upon its leaves ; and then,
With a quick glance, as if a sudden thought
Had struck his mind, there, standing on the spot,
He takes a little tablet out to draw,
Then, muttering to himself, walks on again.
He is the very oddest man of men!
Brother Anselmo tells me that the book
('T was left by chance upon the bench one day,
And in its leaves our brother got a look)
Is scribbled over with all sorts of things, —
Notes about colours, how to mix and lay,
With plans of flying figures, frames for wings,
Caricatures and forts and scaffoldings.
The skeletons of men and beasts and birds,
Engines, and cabalistic signs and words,
Some written backwards, notes of music, lyres,
And wheels with boilers under them and fires,

A sort of lute made of a horse's skull,
Sonnets, and other idle scraps of rhyme, —
Of things like this the book was scribbled full.
I pray your Highness, now, is this the way,
Instead of painting every day all day,
For him to trifle with our precious time?

Ah! there he is now — Would your Highness look
Behind that pillar in the furthest nook,
That is his velvet cap and flowing robe.
See how he pulls his beard, as up and down
He seems to count the stones he treads upon!
'T would irk the patience of the good man Job
To see him idling thus his time away,
As if our Lord and Judas both were done,
And there was nought to do but muse and stray
Along the cloisters. May I dare to pray
Your Highness would vouchsafe one word to say;
For when I speak he only answers me,
"Padre Bandelli, go and say your mass —
That 's what you understand — and let me pass;
I am not idle, though I seem to be."
"Not idle! then I 'm nothing but an ass."
Thus once I spoke, for he annoyed me so;
At which he answered, smiling, "Oh no, no:
Padre, you 're very wise, as all men know."
I mention this to show what pleasant ways
This painter has, and not that I the praise
Accepted as at all deserved by me.

God save us from vain pride, and help us through
Our daily work in due humility!
Not mine the praise for what I have, for *He*
Hath given all! So I began anew:
"Not idle! Well, I know not what you do!
You do not paint our picture, that I see."
To which he said, "A picture is not wrought
By hands alone, good Padre, but by thought.
In the interior life it first must start,
And grow to form and colour in the soul;
There once conceived and rounded to a whole,
The rest is but the handicraft of art.
While I seem idle, then my soul creates;
While I am painting, then my hand translates."
Now this, I say, is nonsense, sheer enough,
Or else a metaphysical excuse
For idleness, and he should not abuse
Your Highness by this sort of canting stuff.
Look at him, sauntering there in his long dress —
If he is working, what is idleness?

Not there, your Highness, — on the other side
Our painter 's walking; he you look at now
Is a poor brother, pious, void of pride,
Who there performs a penitential vow.
He, like Ser Leonardo, does not stroll
Idly, but as he walks recites his prayers,
And reads his breviary; and he wears
A haircloth 'neath his serge to save his soul.
Ah! weak is man, he falls in many snares;

And we with prayer must work, would we control
Those idle thoughts where Satan sows his tares.

But, as I was observing, there have passed
Some twenty long and weary months since he
First turned us out of our refectory,
And who knows how much longer this may last?
Yet if our painter worked there steadily,
I would say nothing; but the work stands still,
While he goes idling round the cloisters' shade.
Pleasant enough for him — but is he paid
For idle dreaming thoughts, or work and skill?

I crave your pardon; if I speak amiss,
Your Highness will, I hope, allowance make
That I have spoken for your Highness' sake,
And not that us it inconveniences,
Although it is a scandal to us all
To see this picture half-done on the wall.
A word from your most gracious lips, I feel,
Would greatly quicken Ser Leonardo's zeal,
And we should soon see o'er our daily board,
The Judas finished, and our blessed Lord.

But he approaches, in his hand the book;
Into its pages should your Highness look,
They would amuse you by their strange devices.
Your gracious presence now he recognizes;
That smile and bow and lifted cap I see
Are for his Prince and Patron, not for me.

LEONARDO DA VINCI POETIZES TO THE DUKE IN HIS OWN DEFENCE.

Padre Bandelli, then, complains of me
Because, forsooth, I have not drawn a line
Upon the Saviour's head; perhaps, then, he
Could without trouble paint that head divine.
But think, O Signor Duca, what should be
The pure perfection of our Saviour's face —
What sorrowing majesty, what noble grace,
At that dread moment when He brake the bread,
And those submissive words of pathos said,
"By one among you I shall be betrayed,"—
And say if 't is an easy task to find,
Even among the best that walk this earth,
The fitting type of that divinest worth,
That has its image solely in the mind.
Vainly my pencil struggles to express
The sorrowing grandeur of such holiness.
In patient thought, in ever-seeking prayer,
I strive to shape that glorious face within,
But the soul's mirror, dulled and dimmed by sin
Reflects not yet the perfect image there.
Can the hand do before the soul has wrought?
Is not our art the servant of our thought?

And Judas, too, — the basest face I see
Will not contain his utter infamy ;
Among the dregs and offal of mankind,
Vainly I seek an utter wretch to find.
He who for thirty silver coins would sell
His Lord must be the Devil's miracle.
Padre Bandelli thinks it easy is
To find the type of him who with a kiss
Betrayed his Lord. Well, what I can I 'll do ;
And if it please his reverence and you,
For Judas' face I 'm willing to paint his.

Padre Bandelli is a sort of man,
Joking apart, whose little round of thought
Is like his life, the measure of a span.
He knows and does the duties he is taught, —
Prays, preaches, eats, and sleeps in dull content
Does the day's work, and deems it excellent ;
Says he 's a sinner, but we 're sinners all,
And puts his own sin down to Adam's fall.
Christ, at the last day, others may reject, —
Poor painters, or great dukes with their state cares ;
But that, with all his masses, fasts, and prayers,
A convent's prior should not be elect,
Padre Bandelli has not half a doubt —
'T were a strange heaven, indeed, with him left out.
Him the imagination does not tease
With hungry cravings, restless impulses ;

Him no despairing days the Furies bring,
No torturing doubts, no anxious questioning;
But day by day his ordered time is spent,
Pacing his petty round of fixed routine.
How should he know the artist's strain within,
His vexing and fastidious discontent?
Art he considers as a sort of trade,
Like laying bricks: If one can lay a yard
In one good hour, how can it be so hard
In two good hours, that two yards should be laid?

But, Signor Duca, you can apprehend
The artist's soul — how there is ne'er an end
Of climbing fancies, longings, and desires,
That burn within him like consuming fires;
How Beauty beckons, and tormenting flees
Just as his hand her shadowy shape would seize.
How sweet and fair the inward vision gleams!
How dull and base the painted copy seems!
We are like Danaus' daughters — all in vain
We strive to fill our vases. Human art
Through myriad leaks lets out the spirit's part,
And nothing but the earthy dregs remain.

But who can force the spirit to conceive?
Its lofty empire is above our will:
Trained though we be, we only can fulfil
Its orders, and a joyous welcome give.
Oft when the music waits, the room is decked,
And hope looks out from the expectant breast,

Vainly we wait to greet the invited guest.
Oft when its presence least our souls expect,
Sudden, unsummoned, there it stands, as Eve
Stood before Adam, — as in twilight sky
The first young star, — half joy, half mystery.

The wilful work built by the conscious brain
Is but the humble handicraft of art;
It has its growth in toil, its birth in pain.
The Imagination, silent and apart
Above the Will, beyond the conscious eye,
Fashions in joyous ease and as in play
Its fine creations, — mixing up alway
The real and the ideal, heaven and earth,
Darkness and sunshine; and then, pushing forth
Sudden upon the field of consciousness
Its world of wonder, leaves to us the stress,
By patient art, to copy its pure grace,
And catch the perfect features of its face.
From hand to spirit must the human chain
Be closely linked, and thence to the divine
Stretch up, through feeling, its electric line,
To draw heaven down, or all our art is vain.
For in its loftiest mood the soul obeys
A higher power that shapes our thoughts, and sways
Their motions, when by love and strong desire
We are uplifted. From a source unknown
The power descends — with its ethereal fire
Inflames us — not possessing but possessed

We do its bidding; but we do not own
The grace that in those happy hours is given,
More than its strings the music of the lyre —
More than the shower the rainbow lent by heaven.
Nature and man are only organ-keys —
Mere soundless pipes — despite our vaunted skill —
Till, with its breath, the power above us fill
The stops, and touch us to its harmonies.

O Signor Duca, as the woman bears
Her child, not in a moment nor a day,
So doth the soul the germ that God doth lay
Within it, with as many pains and cares.
From the whole being it absorbs and draws
Its form and life — on all we are and see
It feeds by subtle sympathetic laws;
Each sense it stirs, it fires each faculty
To hunt the outer world, and thence to seize
Food for assimilation. By degrees
Perfect grows at last in every part,
And then is born into the world of art.

In facile natures fancies quickly grow,
But such quick fancies have but little root.
Soon the narcissus flowers and dies, but slow
The tree whose blossoms shall mature to fruit.
Grace is a moment's happy fortune, Power
A life's slow growth; and we for many an hour
Must strain and toil, and wait and weep, if we
The perfect fruit of all we are would see.

Therefore I wait. Within my earnest thought
For years upon this picture I have wrought,
Yet still it is not ripe; I dare not paint
Till all is ordered and matured within.
Hand-work and head-work have an earthly taint,
But when the soul commands I shall begin.

On themes like these I should not dare to dwell
With our good Prior — they to him would be
Mere nonsense; he must touch and taste and see;
And facts, he says, are never mystical.
Now, the fact is, our worthy Prior says,
The convent is annoyed by my delays;
Nor can he see why I for hours and days
Should muse and dream and idle here around.
I have not made a face he has not found
Quite good enough before it was half-done.
"Don't bother more," he says, "let it alone."
What can one say to such a connoisseur?
How could a Prior and a critic err?

But, not to be more tedious, I confess
I am disturbed to think I so distress
The worthy Prior. Yet 't were wholly vain
To him an artist's feelings to explain;
But, Signor Duca, you will understand,
And so I treat on higher themes with you.
The work you order I shall strive to do
With all my soul, not merely with my hand.

A CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM:

IN WHICH FEDERIGO DI MONTAFELTRO, DUKE OF URBINO, GIVES HIS VIEWS OF RAFFAELLE.

DEDICATED TO H. G. W.

Oh! I admit his talent, — there 's no lack
Of facile talent; what in him I blame
Is that he travels in his master's track
With such a slavish, imitative aim.
'T is Perugino all, from head to foot:
Angels the same, with their affected grace,
Playing the lyre with sideway upturned face;
Round-faced, small-eyed Madonnas, — all the same.
Landscapes mere copies; subjects, branch and root,
His master's subjects, — not an arch or shaft
Of all his architecture, but you see
That too is copied. Every little shoot
Upon his genius is his master's graft.
And yet, through all, there 's clear ability.
Why will he never grow his speciál fruit?

Lately he 's striven to effect a change,
But still an imitator he must go,

From peaceful Perugino's timid range
To the extravagance of Angelo,
Behind them both, of course, in both their ways;
For, as uncompromising Michael says,
"Who follows after, cannot go before."

Then why, too, will he try so many things?
Instead of sticking to one single art,
He must be studying music, twanging strings,
And writing sonnets, with their "heart and dart."
Lately, he 's setting up for architect,
And planning palaces; and, as I learn,
Has made a statue, — every art in turn, —
Like Leonardo (and you recollect,
How with his many arts even he was wrecked);
But if *he* failed, what can this youth expect?

A touch of this same vice his father had:
He laid aside the brush to use the pen;
And though he praised my deeds, — and I, of men,
Should be the last to call the praising bad,
Though overpraised, — yet, be the truth confest,
No man in more than one art can be best.

'T was but the other day I spoke to him,
With earnest hope to make him change his course;
I told him he would dissipate his force
By following the lead of every whim,

And (for I like the youth, and recognize
In all his efforts good abilities)
I urged upon him not to skip and skim
In many arts, but give himself to one,
For life was quite too short for everything,
And doing all things, nothing gets well done.

He thanked me for my kindness, disagreed
With my conclusions in a modest way
(He 's modest, *that* 't is only just to say);
But in a letter that he sends to-day
Here is his answer. Listen, while I read.

"Most noble sir," — and so on, and so on, —
"A thousand thanks," — hem — hem, — "in one
so high,"
"Learned in art," — et cetera, — "I shall try" —
Oh! that 's about his picture, — "critic's eye;"
"Patron," — pho, pho — where *has* the passage
gone?
Ah! here we come to it at last: "You thought,"
He says, "that in too many arts I wrought;
And you advised me to stick close to one.
Thanks for your gracious counsel, all too kind;
And answering, if I chance to speak my mind
Too boldly, pardon. Yet it seems to me
All arts are one, — all branches on one tree;
All fingers, as it were, upon one hand.
You ask me to be thumb alone; but pray,
Reft of the answering fingers Nature planned,
Is not the hand deformed for work or play?

Or rather take, to illustrate my thought,
Music, the only art to science wrought,
The ideal art, that underlies the whole,
Interprets all, and is of all the soul.
Each art is, so to speak, a separate tone;
The perfect chord results from all in one.
Strike one, and as its last vibrations die,
Listen, — from all the other tones a cry
Wails forth, half-longing and half-prophecy.
So does the complement, the hint, the germ
Of every art within the others lie,
And in their inner essence all unite;
For what is melody but fluid form,
Or form, but fixed and stationed melody?
Colours are but the silent chords of light,
Touched by the painter into tone and key,
And harmonized in every changeful hue.
So colours live in sound, — the trumpet blows
Its scarlet, and the flute its tender blue;
The perfect statue, in its pale repose,
Has for the soul a melody divine,
That lingers dreaming round each subtle line,
And stills the gazer lest its charm he lose.
So rhythmic words, strung by the poet, own
Music and form and colour — every sense
Rhymes with the rest; — 't is in the means alone
The various arts receive their difference."

Vague, idle talk! such stuff as this I call;
Pretty for girls — quite metaphysical,

Almost poetic, if you will; but then,
For you and me, or any reasoning men,
All visionary, vague, impractical.
Such silly jargon lacks all common-sense;
How can he dream it helps him paint, to know
The way to tinkle on ten instruments?
Or does he fancy writing rhymes assists
In laying colours? Bah! he 's in the mists.

But let 's go on. Here 's something, I admit,
That shows a less deficiency of wit.

"Life is too short perfection to attain.
We all are maimed; and do the best we can,
Each trade deforms us with the overstrain
Of some too favoured faculty or sense,
O'er-fostered at the others' vast expense.
Yet why should one Art be the others' bane?
The perfect artist should be perfect man.
Oh! let at least our theory be grand,
To make a whole man, not to train a hand;
Rearing our temple, let it be our pride
Nought to neglect, but build with patient care
A perfect temple, finished everywhere,
And not a mere façade with one good side."

Of course, of course, if we were gods; but then,
Life is so short, and we are only men.
These youths, these youths — there 's really some-
thing great

In their ambitions. Let our friend but wait,
And Time will snuff his dreams out, one by one.
I had such dreams once. How they all have
gone!

"If I the model of a man should seek,
Where should I find him? Though the black-
smith's arm
Is muscled well, his lower limbs are weak,
His shoulders curved. The student shall I take?
His o'erworked brain has cost his body harm.
No; he alone will serve who equal strain
Has given each, the body and the brain;
One who, like you, most gracious Duke, has
known
The whole man into consonance to train.
Grace from consent of every force is shown,
Not where one's loss has been another's gain.'

Well put, my Raffaelle; it will never do
To such an argument to say, "Not true."

"Besides, the varied tasking of the mind
Not only makes us sane, but keeps us strong.
The noblest faculty when strained too long
Turns to convention, — wearied, seeks to find
In repetition solace and repose.
'T is only the fresh arm that strikes great blows.
Fallow and change we need, not constant toil,
Not always the same crop on the same soil.

To stretch our powers demands an earnest strain,
And rest, to strengthen what by work we gain.
Sleeping, the body grows in thews and brain."

That 's true, at least — the body must have sleep!
I 'm glad to find one statement here at last
With which I can most cordially agree.
Shall I read more, or is your patience past?
Oh! — as to his originality,
Here are a few words taken from a heap.
One moment first, — here 's something not to skip.

" But please remember, of the famous names,
Who is there hath confined him to one art, —
Giotto, Da Vinci, or Orcagna? No, —
Or our great living master, Angelo, —
These are whole men, whose rounded knowledge shames
Our narrow study of a single part;
Not merely painters, dwarfed in all their aims,
But men who painted, builded, carved, and wrote:
Whole diapasons — not a separate note."

Now for that other passage, — let us see
His thoughts about originality.

" In one sense no man is original, —
Borrowers and beggars are we, one and all.
Art, Science, Thought, grow up from age to age,
And all are palimpsests upon Time's page.
Our loftiest pedestals are tombs; — the seed

Sown by the dead and living in us grow;
And what we are is tinged by what we know.
As from the air our sustenance we draw,
So from all thought our private thought we feed,
Germs strewn from other minds within us breed,
And no one is his own unaided law.
Nor from the age alone we take our hue,
But by the narrower mould of accident
A form and colour to our life is lent;
As under blue sky grows the water blue,
Or clouds unto the mountain's shape are bent.

"Yet each man, following his sympathies,
Unto himself assimilating all,
Using men's thoughts and forms as steps to rise,
Who speaks at last his individual word,
The free result of all things seen and heard,
Is in the noblest sense original.
Each to himself must be his final rule,
Supreme dictator, to reject or use,
Employing what he takes but as his tool.
But he who, self-sufficient, dares refuse
All aid of men, must be a god or fool.

"I took Lippino's figure for St. Paul:
What then? I made it, in the taking, mine,
And gave it new life in a new design.
I worked in Perugino's style, but all
My own my pictures were in every line.
By sympathy of feeling and of thought,

Not coldly copying, in his forms I wrought.
The theme of the Entombment, I admit,
Was from an old sarcophagus of stone;
But to another purpose using it,
Its new expression made it all my own.
From all great men and minds I freely learn,
Orcagna, Giotto, Michael, each in turn,
Thank them for help, and taking what I find,
Stamp on their forms the pressure of my mind.
Well! who that ever lived did not the same?
Name me of all the great names but one name —
Old Homer? Phidias? Virgil? — and more low
In time, not power, Da Vinci? Angelo?
'T is the small nature dares not to receive,
Having no wealth within from which to give.
The greatest minds the greatest debts may owe,
And by their taking make a thing to live.

"Did our Da Vinci scorn, with studious zeal,
Masaccio's nature, Lippi's strength to steal?
Is Giotto's campanile, soaring there
Like music up into our Florence air,
Unfathered by an ancestry of towers?
Or is the round of great St. Peter's dome,
That Michael now is swinging over Rome,
Without a debt to this grand dome of ours?
And Brunelleschi, did he never see
The globed Pantheon's massive dignity?
These men are copyists, then! But, after all,
If these are not, who is original?

"Look round upon our Florence — each to each
See! how her earnest minds and hearts unite,
And buttressed thus in strength attain a height
Which none could ever hope alone to reach!
Or, like a serried phalanx all inspired
By one great hope, and moving to one end,
How strength and daring each to each they lend,
As on they press, undaunted and untired!
Each fighting for the truth, and one for all,
With no mean pride to be original."

Well! here the true and false are mixed with skill;
But let him talk and reason as he will,
I 'm of the same opinion as before; —
A man must strive to be original,
And give himself to one art, not to all.
Besides, the names and facts he numbers o'er
Prove but the rule, being exceptions still.
But, after all, the subject is a bore;
And, Signor Sanzio, you and all your talk
(Which, I 'll confess, is not entirely ill)
Have our permission to withdraw.

Pray walk
Upon the balcony. Is any sight
More fair than Florence in this hazy light,
Sleeping all silent in the afternoon,
Like the enchanted beauty, full of rest,
Her bride-like veil spread careless on her breast?
Our June this year has been a peerless June.

IN THE ANTECHAMBER OF MONSIGNORE DEL FIOCCO.

Our master will be Cardinal erelong —
Is he not made for one? — so smooth and plump,
With those broad jaws, those half-shut peeping eyes,
Those ankle-heavy legs and knotty feet,
Which only need red stockings. Even now
He totters round with the true Cardinal's gait
Upon his tender toes, while you behind
Demurely follow, scarce an ear-shot off,
The pious footsteps of the holy man.
How many years have you thus stalked along
Behind that broad-brimmed, purple-tasseled hat,
In your stiff lace and livery, trained to pause
Whene'er he pauses, turning half to fix
His *Fifthly* on his fingers to some dull
Cringing Abbate shuffling at his side?
Then, when that point is drilled into his brain
(Proving the blessedness of poverty,
Or how the Devil has no cursed wiles
To lure the world to hell like liberty —
The only one great good being obedience),
Back go the hands beneath the creased black silk
That streams behind, and on you march again;

While the gilt carriage lumbers in the rear,
And the black stallions nod their tufted crests.

Yours is a noble station, clinging there
Behind it as you clatter through the town,
Your white calves shaking with the pavement's jar,
The mark and sneer of half the world you meet.
Ah, well! 't is wretched business yours and mine;
I know not which is worst — but then it pays;
The cards are dirty, but what matters dirt
To those who win? Though now the stakes are small,
We 'll hold the court-cards when the suit is red; —
And so it will be soon; why, even now
I seem to see red stockings on his legs; —
And yesterday I said, "Your Eminence,"
As if I thought he now was Cardinal —
"Your Eminence," indeed! At that he smiled
That oily smile of his, and rubbed his hands —
Those thick fat hands, on which his emerald ring
Flashes ('t is worth at least a thousand crowns) —
And said, "Good Giacomo, not 'Eminence,'
I 'm but a Monsignore, all 's too much
For my deserts." Then I, "Your 'Reverence'
Ought to be 'Eminence,' and will be soon;
The tassel 's almost old upon your hat."
"*Sei matto, Giacomo,*" he said, and smiled.
You know those smiles, that glitter falsely o'er
His smooth broad cheeks, as if he asked of you,

"Am I not kind and good?" and all the while
Your soul protests, and calls out "Knave and cheat."
But, then, how can one call him by such names,
When, even with that smile upon his face,
He slips a scudo in one's hand and says,
"Go, Giacomo, and drink my health with this"?
What can one do but bow and try to blush?
"Oh — Reverenza — thanks — you are too good."

Dear man! sweet man! in all those troublous times
What zeal was his! — how earnestly he worked!
Who can forget his pure self-sacrifice,
His virtuous deeds, above this world's reward —
Done for pure Christian duty — done, of course,
For Holy Church — all was for Holy Church —
(Without a notion of this world's reward) —
All for the good of souls and Holy Church —
(*Ora pro nobis*, and that sort of thing) —
All to bring sinners back again to God,
And from the harvest root the devil's tares —
In omnia sæcula — amen — amen.
We don't forget — well! you know whom I mean;
No need to mention names, though no one 's nigh;
We don't forget him whose anointed hands
Were flayed by order of his Reverence,
Ere with his bleeding palms they led him down
Into the court-yard, and we, peeping through
The half-closed blind, saw him throw up his hands

And forward fall upon his face, and writhe,
When the sharp volley rang against the walls.

Those oily fingers wrote that sentence down!
That thick voice, with a hypocritic tone,
While both his palms were raised, decreed that doom.
Who could help weeping when that pious man,
Professing horror at his victim's crime,
And bidding him confess and pray to God,
And saying, "God would pardon him, perhaps,
As he himself would, if the power were his,
But, being the instrument of Church and State,
No choice was given," with his priestly foot
Pushed, you know whom, into a felon's grave?
That bloody stain is still upon the walls,
Of the same colour as the scarlet hat
Our master soon will wear; and, after all,
Who more deserves it? If he stained his soul,
Is not the labourer worthy of his hire?
He shall be raised who doth abase himself!
The good and faithful servant shall be made
The ruler over many! Ah! my friend,
He nothing lost by all those deeds of his.
He erred in zeal, but zeal is not a vice —
'T was all for Holy Church. His secret life,
Perhaps, was not quite perfect? Who of you
Is without sin let him first cast a stone; —
No one, you see; so let us think no more
Of that. Does any Duchess smile the less

At all his compliments and unctuous words
As, leaning o'er her chair, his downcast eyes
He fixes somewhat lower than her lips, —
Upon the jewels on her neck, perchance,
He is so modest, — and with undertone
Whispers, and, deprecating, lifts his hands,
While with her fan she covers half her face?
He knows as well as any man that lives
How far to venture; — covers his foul jokes
With honeyed words, so ladies swallow them; —
Treads on the edge of scandal — not a chance
He will fall in; knows all the secret shoals
Of innuendo; — in pure earnestness
(Oh, nothing more) he seizes their soft hands
And holds them — presses them, as to enforce
His argument; — for this, our Monsignore,
Lifted above temptation, with, of course,
No carnal thought, may do before the world —
Because it must be done through innocence.
Fie on his foul mouth who should hint 't was wrong!
Who 'd be more shock'd than he, the pious man?
He would go home and pray for that lost soul!

And yet, how can a woman pure in heart,
Without disgust, accept his compliments,
And let him feed on her his gloating eyes?
Of course, it 's just because she 's innocent.
Yes! I am lean and dry, a servitor,
Not fat and oily like his Reverence,

And so I can't endure his nauseous ways ; —
All right, of course ! But yet I sometimes think,
Did San Pietro talk to Martha thus,
And every night, wearing his fisherman's ring,
Show his silk-stocking'd legs in soft saloons,
And fish for women with a net like this ?

Those soft fat hands — those sweet anointed hands —
Those hands that wear the glittering emerald ring —
Those hands whose palms are pressed so oft in prayer —
Those hands that fondle high-born ladies' hands —
Those hands that give their blessing to the poor —
Those hateful, hideous hands are red with blood !
Think ! Principessa, when you kiss those hands —
Think ! Novice, when those hands upon your head
Are laid in consecration — think of this !

Stop, Master Giacomo ! don't get too warm !
When Monsignore gave you yesterday,
With those same hateful, hideous, bloody hands,
Your scudo, did you take it, sir, or not ?
Yes ! I confess ! the world will be the world !
One must not ask too much of mortal man,
Nor mortal woman neither, Giacomo !
But yet we cannot always keep a curb
Upon our feelings, school them as we will ;
And I, who bow and cringe and smile all day,

Detest at times my very self, and grow
So restless 'neath my rank hypocrisy,
I must break loose and fling out like a horse
In useless kicks, or else I should go mad.
God knows I hate this man, and so at times,
Rather than take him by the throat, I come
And pour my passion out in idle words;
They ease me. You 're my friend; but if I thought
A word of this would reach his ears; but, no!
We know each other both too well for that.

One or two questions I should like to ask,
If Monsignore would but answer them,
As this — what Sora Lisa says to him
At her confession, once a-week at least
(For Monsignore, having her soul in charge,
When she don't come to him, must go to her).
She used to be so poor, but times are changed,
And Sora Lisa keeps her carriage now;
And those old gowns, by some "Hey, presto, change,"
Have turned to rustling silks; and at her ears
Diamonds and rubies dangle, which she shows,
When she 's the mind, in her own opera box.
Well! well! the office that his Reverence
Gave her poor husband from pure love of him
May pay for these; and if it don't, why then,
It don't — what business is it of ours?
And then, who knows, some uncle may have died

(Uncles are always dying for such folks)
And made her rich; — why should we peep and pry?
With Monsignore her soul is safe at least.

And this reminds me — did you ever know
Nina, that tall, majestic, fierce-eyed girl,
With blue-black hair, which, when she loosed it, shook
Its crimpled darkness almost to the floor? —
She that was Monsignore's friend while yet
He was a humble Abbé — born indeed
In the same town and came to live in Rome?
Not know her? She, I mean, who disappeared
Some ten years back, and God knows how or why?
Well, Nina, — are you sure there 's no one near? —
Nina —
Per Dio! how his stinging bell
Startled my blood, as if his Reverence
Cried out, "You, Giacomo; what, there again
At your old trick of talking? Hold your tongue!"
And so I will, *per Bacco*, so I will; —
Who tells no secrets breaks no confidence.
Nature, as Monsignore often says,
Gave us two eyes, two ears, and but one tongue,
As if to say, "Tell half you see and hear;"
And I 'm an ass to let my tongue run on,
After such lessons. There, he rings again!
Vengo — per Dio — Vengo subito.

THE LESSON OF MONSIGNORE GALEOTTO.

"Now, certainly, he was a fayre prelat." — CHAUCER.

LET us walk up this alley, in the shade
Of the green ilexes, whose boughs have made
An arching gallery of cool privacy.
The garden 's hot — the sun has got so high
It burns into our faces o'er the wall
Of our clipped hedges, and begins to fall
So fierce on the white pebbles of the walk,
Its glare is painful — We shall better talk
Beneath the ilexes, — where it is cool.

Well, as I said, Filippo, you must school
Your temper, must not speak so harsh and quick;
Men are not driven, ox-like, with a stick,
Nor goaded to compliance with our will;
They must be humoured, flattered — seeming still
To yield to them, with humble air admit
Their power of argument, their sense, their wit, —
But, if you might suggest, that so and so,
Perhaps, would make a difference, although
You would not place at all your casual thought

Against their better judgment . . . Men are
caught
By springes like to these — they can be tricked
Always, by some decoy, — to contradict
Is simply stupid — and the dogmatist
Makes one, half ready to agree, resist.

I cannot bear that sharp decisive way
With which you speak — you think so — but
why say,
Though true, exactly what you think or feel;
Who plays his cards well, must and should con-
ceal
His hand from his antagonist, — and all
Are our antagonists in life — A brawl
Is a fool's madness — but, no less a fool
Is he who knows not how his tongue to school,
So as to seem, at least, to give assent
Unto the wit, if not the argument.
Silence is golden — always seek to know
The other's thoughts and views before you show
Your own — you then have ground whereon to
act,
Not blindly, but with wisdom's weapon, tact.
There is no use to lie — oh, that indeed,
In the long run is sure not to succeed;
Lying is gross — yet, I am bound to say,
That truth sometimes may lead us most astray;
When rightly used it is the best of charms,
When wrongly, the most dangerous of arms, —

Not for all time and place — for instance, you
Foil your own aims, sometimes, by being true
To your quick impulse; — where 's the use to speak
The truth, when speaking it will make you weak?
Wait for occasion — oft with a false key
We take the stronghold of the enemy,
Which, if we ventured rashly to attack,
With angry force would rise to beat us back;
Let your mind run before your tongue, — a man
Who has a tongue should also have a plan.

You are too honest, dear Filippo — trust
The world too freely; you are young, and must
Curb those warm impulses that from your heart
Start wild, and train them down by thought and art;
Must learn your daring spirit to repress;
Submit to rule and law, and question less.
You claim your single right of thought, deny
The Church its dogma and authority,
Cry, "Truth is living, absolutely needs
Freedom, and only petrifies in creeds;" —
But Truth is not a veering vane, that goes
A different way with every wind that blows,
A mere kaleidoscopic glass, that takes
New hues, new figures, with each hand that shakes.
No! but a fountain once to man unsealed,
Whose living waters God himself revealed

Unto the Church, — whose forms, like vases, give
But shape to the pure waters they receive.

You "think," — well, would you with your single thought
Reverse what all the Fathers wise have taught,
After long centuries' thinking, and confront
Your eager judgment to the opposing brunt
Of their slow wisdom? — Dear Filippo, see
How we have thriven on our policy,
We work together, not for separate pelf,
As you would act, you only for yourself,
But to exalt the Church — the Church! — is not
That thought alone worth every other thought?
And you have talents that might raise you high,
Will raise you, if you will not so defy
Those wise injunctions we must all obey,
Hard though it seem at first to all. Pray, pray
For more humility. Some future day,
When from that brow its curls are worn away,
The scarlet cap its baldness shall conceal,
The triple crown, perhaps — nay! nay! you feel,
I know, at present, as all young men do
To whom the world and thought itself is new,
You would choose rather "Liberty and Truth,"
For so you name the Folly we call Youth,
Than wed obedience, crush that fierce will down,
And hold Rome's keys, and wear the triple crown.

Well, 't is a grand ambition — Liberty,
If it were possible — yet, trust to me,

It is not possible; — obedience — law —
Self-abnegation — these alone can draw
The whole world after them. Where all agree,
Work with one will, one hope, one energy,
Blindly obedient, nothing can resist; but what
Is Liberty but anarchy of thought, —
Each separate will of that great swarming mass
You call the people, struggling to surpass
All other wills, and in blind ignorance
Wanting — yet never knowing what it wants.
The beasts alone are free, in your grand sense;
But man's true freedom is obedience,
Where all wills bend unto a settled law,
A single purpose, and together draw
For some high object — Ah! your liberty,
Filippo dear, is but a troubled sea,
Vexed with wild currents, lashed by frequent gales,
Where the best ship must down with masts and sails,
Fling its rich cargo to the engulfing waves,
And creep at last to port, with what it saves.

Besides! what gain the nations that are free?
Rest, joy, content? — No, everywhere you see
The freest people the unhappiest;
Full of desires that goad them from their rest,
They crowd, and push, and fight, and end at last
In anarchy and luxury; — all the past
Tells the same story — all the future will —
Only the Church abides through good and ill.

Compare with this the peaceful, studious life,
Leading so softly, undisturbed by strife,
To power, for great, good ends, that here we find
In the still cloisters of the Church; — the mind
Here stores its thought, here trains its highest powers
To highest purposes; — these lives of ours
Fit us to move the world, and with the skill
Of subtle thought subdue unto our will
Its mighty strength. The world — the great brute world,
That bends against us its flat bull-front, curled
With strength, and bellows, and its great horns shakes,
Blind with the dust, deaf with the noise it makes,
Is game that we with easy skill control,
Sure of our power, and, as we will, cajole,
Shaking the scarlet that it hates, and thus
Letting it butt a rag instead of us, —
Always secure when we would end the play,
With our fine rapier point to find the way.
You have ambition, — have it then to rule
This world — to make the beast your game, your tool,
To ring his nose, and train him to your hand, —
For objects high, of course, we understand.

Love! 't is a child's disease, that passes soon,
Like mumps or measles — 't is a little tune
We play upon a pipe when we are young, —

A honey bee, by which we 're often stung
As soon as we have caught it, — nay, to speak
In serious phrase, Filippo, it were weak
To throw away a life's great hopes for love ;
I know these hot desires will sometimes prove
Too strong for us — the Church takes note of that,
And covers with its veil of silence what
It knows weak man will have. It shuts its eyes
To human nature's frail necessities.
If it be done in seemly secrecy,
And without scandal, shall we peep to see
Our brother's weakness ? Therefore, do not doubt,
If you be careful, you may still play out
The private rôle of love — for it were wise
That we should take man in his actual guise ;
The self-same rule will not apply to men
As to pure angels without sin — what then ?
The Church does all it can. These passions, too,
Are not without their use, if we subdue
Their exercise to proper ends, — and see,
They give us oftentimes a secret key
To help great projects on. So, as I said,
Love is not thoroughly prohibited,
Unless it lead to scandal. But, suppose
You will have marriage ; then, indeed, you close
The Church's door, and for a whim, to last
A month or so, your future life you blast.
Take my advice, — drain nothing to its lees,

Only just tasted pleasures long can please;
What we desire is grateful while desired,
Possessed, 't is worthless — Ah! we soon grow tired,
With the continuous every-day of what
Once seemed so charming, when we had it not;
And wives, Filippo, wives are . . .

Hark! 't is noon,
The clock struck then — *Per Bacco*, boy, how soon
This hour has passed — and I shall be too late
For the Marchesa — otherwise I 'd wait —
She has some scheme I think of charity,
On which she wishes to consult with me.
Addio, then — and think on what I 've said, —
The heart must be submissive to the head.

May, 1855.

THE PADRE AND THE NOVICE.

DEDICATED TO R. L.

I.

Do you hear, Lorenzo? I say these wishes and vague desires
Will all of them pass away, though now they seem so bright;
They are will-o'-the-wisps that breed uncertain treacherous fires:
No real lamps that lead the traveller through the night.

II.

My youth has gone like a song. You heed not an old man's words.
Yet once, like you, I was young. Alas! I know it all;
And often my memory smites my thoughts, and awakens chords
Of far and dim delights, that I tremble as I recall.

III.

I loved! Ah! yes, I loved with a love that maddened my mind —
With a passion that reason reproved — I loved, as I pray to God

You never may love, my boy; and the storm
came down, and the wind,
And my hope was crushed, and my joy — as you
crush these flowers in the sod.

IV.

I awoke — as a man may wake from a wild and
feverish dream —
Useless and helpless — a wreck, — with scarcely
the wish or power
On the spars of life to drift, — and a fierce re-
gret that the stream,
Sweeping to death so swift, had flung me aside
for an hour.

V.

Slowly the world came back; but oh! how
changed and drear!
The serpent was on its track — my spirit was
bitter and dark.
I rushed to battle; — Death passed me, shaking
his sword and spear,
And, scornful, aside he cast me, making the
happy his mark.

VI.

But the savage hate of life died down like a fad-
ing flame;
And weary and worn with strife, and broken and
spent with care, —

With a spirit inly stirred, to the convent grate I came,
And God in his mercy heard, — and peace returned with prayer.

VII.

There is peace, that nothing taints, in the life that to God is given —
To Christ, and the holy saints — that minister unto man;
For the world is a snare and a lure that leads us away from heaven,
And love is a demon impure, that tears us whenever it can.

VIII.

Ah! flee from the coils it spreads. Oh yield not unto its snare!
Gilded at first its threads, in torture at last they end;
And Love, like the Sphinx of old, with its bosom and face so fair,
Hath arms of the tiger to hold, and claws of the tiger to rend.

IX.

Look not back — be advised — on the path you have chosen so well.
The Church is the fold of Christ: the world is the devil's den.
Hark! 't is the Angelus, ringing afar from the convent bell —
Ave Maria sanctissima, ora pro nobis. —Amen

L'ABBATE.

Were it not for that singular smell
That seems to the genus priest to belong,
Where snuff and incense are mingled well
With a natural odour quite as strong:
Were it not for those little ways
Of clasped and deprecating hands;
And of raising and lowering his eyes always
As if he only waited commands —

Little there is in him of the priest,
With only the slightest touch of cant,
With a simple, guileless heart in his breast,
And a mind as honest as ignorant.
Half a child and half a man,
Ripe in the Fathers and green in thought,
In his little circle of half a span
He thinks that he thinks what he was taught.

His duty he does to the scruple's weight;
Recites his prayers, and mumbles his mass,
And without his litanies, early and late,
Never permits a day to pass.
Look at him there in the garden-plots
Repeating his office, as to and fro

He paces around the orange-pots,
Looking about while his quick lips go.

His simple pleasure in simple things,
His willing spirit that never tires,
His trivial jokes and wonderings,
His peaceful temper that never fires,
His joy over trifles of every day,
The feeble poems he loves to quote, —
Are just like a child, with his heart in his play,
While his duty and lessons are drill and rote.

What life means he does not think;
Reason and thought he has been told
Only lead to a perilous brink,
Away from Christ and the Church's fold.
Therefore he humbly and blindly obeys;
Does what he 's ordered and reasons not;
Performs his prayers, and thinks he prays,
And asks not how, or why, or what.

Happy in this, why stir his mind,
Stagnant in thought although it be?
Leave him alone — he is gentle and kind,
And blest with a child's simplicity.
Thinking would only give him unrest,
Struggle, and toil, and inward strain;
His heart is right in his thoughtless breast,
Why should one wish to torment his brain?

Yet out of pastime one evil day
I unfolded to him Pythagoras' plan —
How step by step the soul made its way
From sea-anemone up to man, —
How onward to higher grades it went,
If its human life had been fair and pure;
Or if not, to the lower scale was sent,
Again to ascend to man, and endure.

And so the soul had gleams of the past,
And felt in itself dim sympathies
With nature, that ended in us at last,
And each of whose forms within us lies.
He smiled at first, and then by degrees
Grew silent and sad, and confessed 't was true,
But with spirit so pained and ill at ease,
That my foolish work I strove to undo.

This thinking 's the spawn of Satan, I said,
That tempts us into the sea of doubt;
And Satan has endless snares to spread,
If once with our reason we venture out.
Here you are in your Church like a port,
Anchored secure, where never a gale
Can break your moorings, — nor even in sport
Should you weigh your anchor or spread your sail.

So I got him back to his anchor again,
And there in the stagnant harbour he lies;

And he looks upon me with a sense of pain
  As a wild freebooter; for to his eyes
Free thinking, free sailing seems to be,
  A sort of a godless, dangerous thing,
Like a pirate's life on a stormy sea —
  And sure at the last damnation to bring.

IL CURATO.

DEDICATED TO R. S.

THERE 's our good curate coming down the lane,
Taking his evening walk as he is wont:
'Neath the dark ilexes he pauses now
And looks across the fields; then turning round,
As Spitz salutes me with a sharp high bark,
Advising him a stranger 's near, he stops,
Nods, makes a friendly gesture, and then waits —
His head a little bent aside, one hand
Firm on his cane, the other on his hip —
And ere I speak he greets me cheerily.

"A lovely evening, and the well-reaped fields
Have given abundant harvest. All around
They tell me that the grain is large and full;
Peasant and landlord both of them content;
And with God's blessing we shall have, they say,
An ample vintage; scarcely anywhere
Are traces of disease among the grapes;
The olives promise well, too, as it seems.
Good grain, good wine, good oil — thanks be to God
And the Madonna, who give all things good,
And only ask from us a thankful heart!

"Yes, I have been to take my evening walk
Down to the Borgo; for, thank Heaven, I still
Am stout and strong and hearty, as you see.
I still can walk my three good miles as well
As when I was but sixty, though, perhaps,
A little slower than I used; but then
I 've turned my eightieth year — I have indeed!
Though you would scarce believe it. More than
that,
I 've never lost a tooth — all good and sound —
Look! not a single one decayed or loose —
As good to crack a nut as e'er they were.
They 're the great secret of my health, I think;
Like a good mill they grind the food up well,
And keep the stomach and digestion good.

"Yes, sir! I 've passed the allotted term of
man,
Threescore-and-ten. I 'm fourscore years, all
told;
But, the Lord help us, how we old men boast!
What are our fourscore years or fivescore years
(If I should ever reach as far as that)
Compared with the eternity beyond?
Yet let us praise God for the good he gives;
All are not well and strong at fourscore years;
There 's farmer Lanti with but threescore years,
See how he 's racked with his rheumatic pains;
He scarce can crawl along.
Do you take snuff?

"Yes, sir! 't is fifty years since first I came
As curate to this village — fifty years!
When I look back it scarce seems possible,
And yet 't is fifty years last May since first
I came to live in yonder little house.
You see its red-tiled roof and loggia there
Close-barnacled upon the church, that shows
Its belfry-tower above the olive-trees.
The place is rude and rough, but there I 've lived
So long, I would not change it if I could.
Old things grow dear to us by constant use;
Habit is half our nature; and this house
Fits all my uses, answers all my needs,
Just as an old shoe fits one's foot; and there
I sleep as sound with its bare floor and walls
As if its bricks were spread with carpets soft
And all the ceilings were with frescoes gay.

"But what need I of pictures on my walls?
Out of my window every day I see
Pictures that God hath painted, better far
Than Raffaelle or Razzi — these great slopes
Covered with golden grain and waving vines
And rows of olives; and then far away
Dim purple mountains where cloud-shadows drift
Darkening across them; and beyond, the sky,
Where morning dawns and twilight lingering dies.
And then, again, above my humble roof
The vast night is as deep with all its stars
As o'er the proudest palace of the king.

"So, sir, my house is good enough for me.
I have been happy there for many years,
And there 's no better riches than content;
There I 've my little plot of flowers — for flowers
Are God's smile on the earth, — I could not do
Without my flowers, and there I train my vines,
Just for amusement; for the people here,
Good, honest creatures, do not let me want
For grapes and wine, howe'er the season be;
Then I 've two trees of apricots, and one
Great fig-tree, that beneath my window struck
Its roots into a rock-cleft years ago,
And of itself, without my care, has grown
And thriven, till now it thrusts its leaves and figs
Into my very room. Sometimes I think
This was a gift of God to me to say,
'Behold! how out of poverty's scant soil
A life may bravely grow and bear good fruit,
And be a blessing and a help.' May I
Be like this fig-tree, by the grace of God!
I have one peach-tree, but the fruit this year
Is bitter, tasting somewhat of the stone.
Our farmers tell me theirs are all the same;
I think they may have suffered from the drought,
Or from that hail-storm in the early spring.

"Yes, sir! 't is fifty years in this old house
I 've lived; and all these years, day after day,
Have run as even as a ticking clock,
One like another, summer, winter, spring;

And ne'er a day I've failed to have my walk
Down to the Borgo, spite of wind and rain.
While in the valley low the white mist crawls,
I 'm up to greet the morning's earliest gleam
Above the hill-tops. After noon I take
An hour's siesta when the birds are still,
And the cicale stop, and, as it were,
All nature falls asleep. As twilight comes,
I take my walk, and, ere the clock strikes ten,
Lie snugly in my bed, and sleep as sound
And dreamless sleep as when I was a boy.
Why should I not? God has been very good,
And given me strength and health! Praise be to
Him!

"My life is regular and temperate!
Good wine, sir, never hurts a man; it keeps
The heart and stomach warm — that is, of course,
Unless 't is taken in excess; but then,
All things are bad, if taken in excess.
I drink, perhaps, more wine now than I did;
For as old age comes on I need it more —
But in all things my life is temperate.
I take my cup of coffee when I rise;
I dine at mid-day, and I sup at seven;
I sit upon my loggia, where the vines
Spread their green shadow to keep off the sun,
And there I say my offices and prayers,
And in my well-thumbed breviary read, —
Now listening to the birds that chirp and sing;

Now reading of the martyrdom of saints;
Now looking at the peasant in the fields;
Now pondering on the patriarchs of old.
Then there are daily masses — sometimes come
Baptisms, burials, marriages — and so
Life slips along its peaceable routine.

"My people here are generous and kind;
Of all good things they own I have my share,
And I, in turn, do what I can to help,
And smooth away their cares, compose their strifes,
Assuage their sorrows. By kind words alone
One may do much, with the Madonna's aid.
And then, in my small way, I am of use
To cure their ailments: scarce a day goes by
But I must, like a doctor, make my calls,
And see my patients. After fifty years
One must be a physician or a fool.
There 's a poor creature now in yonder house
I 've spent an hour beside this afternoon,
Holding her hands and whispering words of faith,
And saying what I could to ease her soul.
I know not if she heard me — haply not,
For she is gone almost beyond the reach
Of human language — far, far out alone
On the dim road we all must tread at last.

"Antonio Bucci keeps his lands here well!
An honest, frugal, and industrious man;

And his four daughters, — healthy, handsome girls:
Vittoria is a little spoiled, perhaps,
By the Count's admiration — and, in truth,
She is a striking creature; but all that,
You know, is nonsense, and I told her so.
Rosa is married, as you know, and makes
A sturdy wife. She has one little child,
With cheeks like apples. And Regina, too,
And Fanny — both are good and honest girls.
Per Bacco! take them all in all, I think
They 're better for Antonio than four boys.
I see them in the early mists of morn
Going a-field; and listen! there they are,
Down in the vineyard, singing, as they tend
Those great white oxen at their evening feed.

"Well, Spitz, we must be going now, or else
Old Nanna 'll scold us both for being late.
Stop barking! Better manners, sir, I say!
He 's young, you see; the old one died last spring,
And this one 's over frisky for my age
(You are — you are! you know you are, you scamp!)
But with his foolishness he makes me smile.
As he grows older he 'll grow more discreet.
('T is time to have your supper? So it is!)
And for mine, too, I think — and so, good-night!"

So the old curate lifts his hat and smiles,
And shakes his cane at Spitz, and walks away,
A little stiff with age, but strong and hale,
While Spitz whirls round and round before his path,
With volleys of sharp barks, as on they go.
And so good-night! you good old man, — good-night!
With your child's heart, despite your eighty years.
I do not ask or care what is your creed —
Your heart is simple, honest, without guile,
Large in its open charity, and prompt
To help your fellow-men, — on such as you,
Whatever be your creed, God's blessing lies.

IN ST. PETER'S.

THE CONVERT TALKS TO HIS FRIEND.

A NOBLE structure truly! as you say, —
Clear, spacious, large in feeling and design,
Just what a church should be — I grant alway
There may be faults, great faults, yet I opine
Less on the whole than elsewhere may be found.
But let its faults go — out of human thought
Was nothing ever builded, written, wrought,
That one can say is whole, complete, and round;
Your snarling critic gloats upon defects,
And any fool among the architects
Can pick you out a hundred different flaws;
But who of them, with all his talking, draws
A church to match it? View it as a whole,
Not part by part, with those mean little eyes,
That cannot love, but only criticise,
How grand a body! with how large a soul!

Seen from without, how well it bodies forth
Rome's proud religion — nothing mean and small
In its proportion, and above it all
A central dome of thought, a forehead bare
That rises in this soft Italian air

Big with its intellect, — and far away,
When lesser domes have sunken in the earth,
Stands for all Rome uplifted in the day,
An art-born brother of the mountains there.
See what an invitation it extends
To the world's pilgrims, be they foes or friends.
Its colonnades, with wide embracing arms,
Spread forth as if to bless and shield from harms,
And draw them to its heart, the inner shrine,
From the grand outer precincts, where alway
The living fountains wave their clouds of spray,
And temper with cool sound the hot sunshine.

Step in — behind your back the curtain swings;
The world is left outside with worldly things.
How still! save where vague echoes rise and fall,
Dying along the distance — what a sense
Of peace and silence hovers over all,
That tones the marbled aisle's magnificence,
And frescoed vaults and ceilings deep with gold,
To its own quiet. — See! how grand and bold,
Key of the whole, swells up the airy dome
Where the apostles hold their lofty home,
And angels hover in the misted height,
And amber shafts of sunset bridge with light
Its quivering air — while low the organ groans,
And from the choir's gilt cages tangling tones
Whirl fugueing up, and play and float aloft,
And in its vast bell die in echoes soft.

And mark! our church hath its own atmosphere,
That varies not with seasons of the year,
But ever keeps its even temperate air,
And soft, large light without offensive glare.
No sombre, gothic sadness here abides
To awe the sense — no sullen shadow hides
In its clear spaces — but a light as warm
And broad as charity smiles o'er the whole,
And joyous art and colour's festal charm
Refine the senses, and uplift the soul.

You scorn the aid of colour, exile art,
And with cold dogmas seek to move the heart;
But still the heart rebels, for man is wrought
Of God and clay, of senses as of thought.
Religion is not logic, — husks of creeds
Will never satisfy the spirit's needs.
Strain up with high theologies the wise,
But not the less with art's sweet mysteries
Cling to the common heart of man, content
To save him, though it be through sentiment.
You whip the intellect to heaven with pain,
And Beauty with her fair enchanting train
From out your cold bare church is rudely driven;
And yet what matters it *how* heaven we gain
If at the last we really get to heaven?
No! You are wrong; the end at last must be,
That the heart, struggling with such sophistry,
Breaks through the fine-spun web of logic —
yearns

For Love and Beauty, and to *us* returns;
Or worse, it starves to death, and left alone
The head to godless madness journeys on.
The strongest wings too sternly strained, must
droop,
Give them a happy earth on which to stoop.

There is no folly like asceticism
When preached to all — Religion 's but a prism
That makes truth blue to this, to that one brown;
One hugs his lash, for God to him 's a frown;
One would prefer a kindly Devil's hell
To heaven, if with an angry God to dwell.
And why should you, in this great world of ours,
Give God the wheat, and give the Devil flowers?
Think you that any child was ever born,
Loved not the poppies better than the corn?
And for the most part we are children here,
That hold our Father's hand, and call him — dear.

The head is narrow, but the heart is broad,
And through the senses doors by thousands lead
To Love's pure temple — and the very God
Comes through them oftentimes when least we
heed;
Yet, though an angel at their door should come,
And knock for entrance, both his flushing wings
Radiant with love's warm hues and colourings,
You cry, "No entrance here, go back to Rome,
Devil in angel's shape! they 'll let you in —

Or, if you be no tempting shape of sin,
Enter the great door of the intellect,
That is the only entrance to our sect."
Think you not God frowns, and the angels weep,
Turning away? Great Nature will not creep
Into such narrow schemes — where'er she goes
Flowers laugh before her — from toil's planted rows
The lark springs singing; Dawn for her flings out
Its glowing curtains; Day, with festal shout,
Bursts glorious in, and flares o'er all the east,
Till Earth shouts back as at a joyous feast;
And after twilight leaves the clouds' long bars
The cool blue tent of night she sows with stars,
And hushes all the darkened land to dreams,
Through which the silver sliding river gleams;
Her lavish hand for beauty never spares,
Her singing robes where'er she goes she wears;
No long-drawn face is hers, morose and sad,
As your religion craves, but sweet and glad.
Is it to tempt us, then, to death and sin?
Ah, no! my friend, she only hopes to win
With thousand shifts these fickle souls of ours,
Not with her rods alone, but with her flowers.

You smile your unbelief; I recognize
The stern protester in that sad and wise
And solemn shake of head; you still prefer
Your cold bare walls and droning minister;
You hate the priest (of course you mean not me,

But the whole system) — well, well, let it be,
I will not argue that at present, yet
Some time or other we will talk of it;
But this one thing I say, and say again,
Great works are born of joy and not of pain --
The Devil is an isolated brain.

Why point there to the altar with a sniff
Of such superior virtue, just as if
Those ceremonial forms the truly wise
Perceive are tricks, and therefore must despise.
Dear friend, observe, this service is not made
For one small chapel, where each word that 's said
Might start the furthest sleeper — it appeals,
Not through the ear, as yours, but through the eye;
Each sign or gesture is a word that tells
As clear a meaning as your "seventhly."
Your service in this vast basilica,
Would it subserve a better purpose — eh?
A violent man in black, a furlong off,
Screaming, but all unheard, you would not scoff,
Yet, as you do not know its sense, you think
Folly like this is quite enough to sink
The Roman church — these bendings of the knee
And crossings, look like pure idolatry.
Believe it not, a form is but a form,
Not bad or good except as it is warm
With the heart's blood — the spirit 't is alone
That gives the worth to all that 's said or done.

Be reverent, friend! nor sneer at her who kneels
In that dim chapel while her beads she feels,
Up-glancing at the saint that bleeds above.
What if her creed be false? one drop of love
Is worth a thousand creeds. I would not care
Though she should whisper to her lover there,
So full of love for him, that oft she prays
With idle lips — it is not what she says
But what she is that saves her — if her heart
Be from the ritual service all apart,
But lose itself in earnest love for him,
God is still served — ay! and perchance the grim
And sad observance of a loveless task
You would enforce, he would not rather ask.

But, hist, the sharp bell tinkles — 't is the Host
The Pope uplifts — you will not, friend, be lost,
Though you should kneel.

. . . . . .

You could not stand apart,
I knew you must be stirred — you have a heart.
Was it not wondrous, when the multitude,
With a vast murmur, like a wind-swayed wood,
Dropped to its knees, and sudden bayonets flashed
A cold gray gleam, and clanging side-arms clashed
Upon the pavement, as along the nave
The helms of guards went down with dropping wave
Of their long horsehair, — and a silence deep

And full of awe above us seemed to sweep,
Like some great angel's wing, 'neath which all hearts
Were shadowed — till from out the silence starts
A silver strain of trumpets, sweet and clear,
That soars and grows in the hushed atmosphere,
And swells along the aisles, and up the height
Of the deep dome, and dies in dizzy flight
Among the cherubs — and we know above
The incarnate Christ is looking down in love —
And then, when all was over, like a weight
Too great to bear uplifted from the heart,
The crowd rose up and rustled all elate —
Ah, friend! the soul is touched by all this art —
But come — the crowd moves — shall we too depart?

BARON FISCO AT HOME.

HA, my old friend! so, you 've come back again!
Sit down, sit down! — 't is years since we have met.
How goes the world with you? — You shake your head!
Not well? Indeed! I 'm sorry. So your plan
Did not succeed. You see 't was as I feared.
You would not heed me, thought my counsel bad;
Would go your own way; had your notions high
Of honesty and honour, and all that,
Straightforwardness, uprightness, these at last
Would, *must* succeed; — what think you of it now?
Was it not as I told you? Honesty
Is simply the worst policy on earth:
As for the other world, the future world,
If any such there be, it may be best;
But for this world, made as it is, 't is worst —
A mean low proverb, and what 's more, a lie.
"Virtue 's its own reward," exactly so —
Its own reward, whatever that may be,
But not the world's success. No, no, my friend!

You look surprised to find me titled, rich,
Housed in a palace, playing the great man —

It must be laughable to you, who know
How we began in life. So let us laugh —
Laugh inextinguishable laughter, just
As the old Augurs did upon the sly
When no one saw them. Faith, this serious load
Of dignity is sometimes hard to bear!
And pleasant 't is to meet a friend with whom
One may throw off one's livery of pretence,
Relax, laugh, lie no more, be natural.

So now, a truce to lying and pretence, —
I do so suffocate beneath my mask,
I am so sick of my falsetto voice,
Almost I 'd like to cry out to the world
I am a scoundrel, though a prosperous one —
Only it would not do; — and then so long
To Christian jargon I have schooled my tongue
And virtuous slang, that it comes hard at last
Even to myself to own the very truth,
And wholly cease to be a hypocrite —
Nay, sometimes I impose upon myself,
And almost think I am what I pretend.

You bring the old times back, how vividly!
We started from the self-same path in life,
You one way, I the other. Both of us
When we were young and poor, ay, very poor,
Hawked through the streets our little stock of wares
Spread on a tray, and swinging from our necks,

Pens, pencils, trinkets, brooches, — all mere sham;
Mine were, at least, — what yours were, you know best;
And so, mere boys, we bore along the streets
Our tawdry store, and cried: "Who 'll buy? Who 'll buy?"
Well, passers bought of me more than of you
Simply because I lied with glib, false tongue,
Vaunted my goods as real, — in a word,
Cheated; of course I cheated, if I could.
What 's any trade but cheating? All the world
Strove to cheat me, and I strove to cheat them.
And thus at first we earned enough to live —
Badly, of course, but still we lived and saved;
Went to bed hungry many a night to dream
Of coming fortune, that was slow to come.

So daily turning over our small gains,
We by degrees laid by a pretty sum, —
Paltry enough indeed, but still enough
At least to start upon — to place our feet
Upon the ladder's lowest rung of trade;
And then we parted, what long years ago!
How many is it? Forty at the least.
And now we meet again. Ah well, my friend!
You have not prospered; you are poor, I see, —
Still poor — hungry perhaps.
Stop! let me ring, —
A glass of good old wine will do you good.

Wine? You shall breakfast with me — we will talk
Over old times. Perhaps 't is not too late
Even now to put you on the prosperous road.
We 'll see — we 'll see!
John, set the table here —
Set it for two — my friend will lunch with me;
And bring two bottles of that old red seal
Out of the right bin, A 1 — upper shelf.
And your champagne? You like it sweet or dry?
Dry? I agree with you. The best dry, John —
You know my brand; and quick too, don't delay.

Ah, you are looking at my pictures! Well,
What say you of them? That 's Meissonier —
A drinking-bout. Fine, I am told — I know
It stood me in a hundred thousand francs,
And cheap at that. That 's a Fortuny there.
Bright, is n't it? And that? Oh, that 's a nymph!
By — faith, I 've quite forgot who painted it!
Nude — yes, I think so — very nude, but then
That 's all the vogue now. Living, is it not?
Live, palpitating flesh? To balance it
There 's a Madonna pale and pure enough,
Painted by — what 's his name? Enough of these —
You 'll come and look at them another time.
Now for our breakfast, lunch, or what you will.

You need not wait, John! Come, sit down, my friend!

Well, yes! I have succeeded as you say;
You find me rich — ay, and I mean to be
Much richer. 'T is the first step costs. To gain
The first ten thousand costs pains, toil, care, skill,
Great self-denial; after that it grows
Easier and easier, — and at last your pile
Breeds almost of itself left quite alone.
But then I never let it quite alone.
How did I make the first ten thousand? Well,
Simply by following out my principles —
Not yours. Oh no! Your principles were fine,
High, noble, anything you will, but then
Purely unpractical. I took the world
Just as I found it; strove not to amend
Its many faults, but profit by them all, —
Made large professions, crouched and crept and crawled,
Put in my pocket all my pride, — picked up
Out of the dirtiest gutter, so to speak,
The dirtiest penny — not too proud for that —
Bore all reviling patiently, bent low
To kiss the hand that struck me; what I felt
Within me I concealed, never gave voice
To bitterness in empty words. Ah no!
Not such a fool; bided my time — talked soft —
Was simply sad to be misunderstood —
Meant to do right but was deceived by knaves

Who took advantage of my ignorance.
Ah me! ah me! ah, what a wicked world!
And then your splendid counters, too, I used, —
Had always in my mouth those sounding words,
Truth, Honour, Justice, Duty, Honesty.
Reproved false dealing, speaking; went to church,
Prayed loudly, openly declared myself
A miserable sinner; dropped my mite
Into the poor-box in the face of all;
Let all my good deeds shine out before men,
And wore a face of pure simplicity.

A cloak, you say! Well, yes! I wore a cloak.
One must not go quite naked in this world.
We must use phrases — only they are fools
Who think them more than phrases. Everywhere
Men use them — in the pulpit, in the mart.
But who does more than use them as a cloak,
If there be any such, they are rank fools.
Dishonest was I? Fie! Beyond the verge
Of Law — and *that*, as I suppose, is right —
I never put my foot, or not both feet;
One foot within the Law I always kept.
Of course I used the Law, and studied it,
Availed myself of all its shifts and turns, —
And in its limits planted, flung my nets
Beyond, to haul my hooked fish safely in.

With even little means one may do much
Through knowledge of the law and pains and skill.

My little business at the first I did,
Only from hand to hand, from mouth to mouth, —
Never with writings, contracts, signatures —
That is on my part, never put my name
To obligations. Promises in words,
Of course, I gave ; but promises are air —
One may forget, deny, misapprehend.

Shaved notes ? Of course. Lent money ? Yes, of course.
Upon usurious interest ? Stop, my friend !
What is usurious interest ? If I own
A little sum, and some poor man has need
Of just that sum, I should of course be glad
To give it him, not lend it ; but indeed
I am too poor, have other duties too,
I dare not run even temporary risk.
But for your note, say, for a hundred francs,
You must at once have money. Ah, good sir,
I have but fifty ; and your simple note,
What is it worth ? Out of pure friendliness
I offer this ; but pray don't take me up —
This is a friend's act, who can call it wrong ?

There have been times, I will confess to you,
That I have sheered too closely to the law,
And made mistakes — but they were mere mistakes.
I once forgot some money that was placed
For my safe keeping in my hands, forgot

Most absolutely — and, in fact, forgot
To make a memorandum. Being thus,
I naturally used it for my own.
But somehow it was proved that I was wrong,
And I repaid it — certainly — at once,
When it was proved; but the censorious world
Would not admit this was a mere mistake.
Ah me! what evil minds and thoughts there are!

There have been several mistakes like this;
But who among us does not make mistakes?
There were some notes that once passed through
my hands
With altered numbers, — in one case, indeed,
With awkward signatures, — mere carelessness.
I should have been more careful, I admit, —
And even now I scarce forgive myself.

Well, this is all, I think: you see, my friend,
How I have prospered. Spite of my mistakes
I have my palace here, who used to climb
To the fifth story of my garret mean;
I have rich meats and wines (this wine, I think,
You will acknowledge good), French cook, and all
That luxury asks, who once was well content
With my stale crust, and once a week, at most,
A scrap of meat, not always sure of that.
Around my neck I carried once my tray,
And now my brougham and horses carry me —
Nor finer horses will you see in town.

My play-house was the street once, — now I own
My opera-box, and sitting there at night
I take some pride that I am gazed at there
And pointed out as one to be observed, —
The Baron Fisco — that is he. Ah, well!
Little we thought, we two poor ragged boys,
Of anything like this; but now I am
Wealthy, respected, — and ennobled too, —
Have been a Deputy, and should be still
But for an unexplained mistake, that now
Is scarce worth mentioning since it is past.

To me obsequious many a hat is raised
Despite it all; and on my breast I wear
Stars, crosses, ribbons, when I go to Court, —
And smiling, I shake hands with some like you —
Having such principles as yours, I mean —
Upon whose breast I see no simplest cross
To hide the well-worn coat with its white seams.
It pays, you see — it pays, say what we will.

Success, my friend, covers all kinds of sins.
Never be found out, that 's my rule of life.
Truth, Honour, Honesty, are excellent
To talk about, but as strict rules of life
Are, let us say, most serious obstacles.
You 've found them such, I think — so have not I
Little by little small things grow to great.
One must be patient — never force one's card,
But wait the time to play. Riches are power,

And having won them, if we bide our time,
We can buy anything we will. All things
Are purchasable — if we only knew
Just how and when to buy them. That needs
skill.
Honours and titles? Ah, well — well — a loan
Is sometimes needed, — privately, you know, —
For persons high in power and influence;
And then, of course, one lends it as a friend,
With no advantage asked or dreamed. Ah no!
Glad of the honour to be borrowed from, —
Only too proud to be of the least use, —
Even as a carpet to be trod upon, —
Such generosity brings its reward.

And then, again, with riches at command,
Things take a different aspect, better name.
What looks like swindling with a petty sum,
Is on a grand and speculative scale
Honest enough, so it be large enough.
The difference 'twixt a million and a franc,
Makes such a difference in so many ways.

Come, fill your glass again — we are old friends;
You see I nought conceal, speak openly.
We began life together. I am rich,
You poor. You see my principles were best.
If you object to the word principles,
I 'll say my practices. We 'll not discuss
The word — that 's nothing. Now I say to you

Join me, I 'm getting old and tired too;
Be my first clerk, first confidential man —
I 'll pay you well; and having gone thus far,
Made enough money, if indeed one has
Ever enough, quite, — I can now afford
To let you have your way, since I can trust
Your honesty, and *that*, I must confess,
Is of all things the rarest on the earth.
I have been seeking for an honest man,
God knows how long! I find him here at last.

You smile as if to say — "So, at the last,
Even Honesty succeeds." Well, — yes, — sometimes.
Not of itself, though, save by happy chance,
When it can lend itself to abler hands.
We all like Honesty in those we use —
That is, as far as what concerns ourselves.

ZIA NICA.

Old Zia Nica, she had looked through life —
Its deeps and shoals had sounded — felt the strife
Of storms — sailed round its capes and reefs — and known
The absolute whole of passion's burning zone.
Queen of the osteria there she sat,
Half listening, while around her buzzed its chat:
Her red-rimmed eyes, all bloodshot from carouse,
Half shut, and peering out 'neath shaggy brows;
And now and then a grim sardonic smile
Quivering at some coarse speech across her lips,
As up she sharply glanced, and ceased the while
To drum the table with her finger-tips.
All taste for gracious things was gone; her tongue
Craved the sharp whet of savage words, the zest
Of some lewd speech, some bitter, biting jest,
That like raw brandy for a moment stung.
Thus stern she sat, amid her compeers there,
Over her sunken cheeks her coarse gray hair
Straggling, a wicked sharpness in her look,
Like some spent fury. Now and then she struck
Sharply her clenched hand on the board, until
The glasses rang, and every man was still
To listen, as with voice high, harsh, and shrill,

She shrieked some savage taunt, or jest so lewd,
It seemed to prick the skin and draw the blood;
And then with coarse laugh opening wide her jaws
(Where, either side the mouth's red-roofed ravine,
Two yellow teeth, like ruined piers, were seen),
She paused, expectant of the fierce applause.
"*Bravo, per Bacco!* Zia Nica's shot
Is in the very bull's-eye — is it not?"

If beauty, maidenly reserve, and grace,
Once, as they say, in earlier, happier hours,
Grassed softly over this volcano's vent,
The time has long gone by of grass or flowers;
Ay, and the passionate and flaming days,
They, too, have passed, and all their fury spent,
And left but ashes, scoriæ, blasted stones,
Cast forth by passion, the dead wreck of sin.
Yet impotent, low growls, and rumbling moans,
And sharp convulsive throes, still stir within;
Still the old crater, burnt out at its heart,
At times a savage tongue of flames will dart;
And Zio Tonio trembles even now,
Despite his coward smile, so faint and grim —
Trembles, as down she shuts her dinted brow,
And her eyes, closing, take slow aim at him.

And yet not wholly vanished is all grace;
One vein of love runs like a singing stream

Through all this scoriæ ; and across her face,
Praise but her grandchild, shoots a sudden gleam,
As she strokes down his curled and tangled hair.
Touch him for harm, — the tiger from her lair
Is not more swift to spring, more wild to scream,
More fierce with hand and tongue to rend and tear.

Come, Zia Nica, fill a brimming glass !
Nay, sit not thus, your hands upon your knees,
But drain its red blood down unto the lees.
Yours is no heart to strike to an "alas" ; —
Up ! while the mandoline and thrummed guitar
Ring through the osteria's vaulted wall,
And all our glasses jar and voices call —
Hark to the echoes of the days afar !
Hands on your broad hips, —shuffle down the floor
A tottering salterello, — pipe once more
That old cracked voice, — and while the noisy jar
Of Passatello stops, and we who quaff
The rich red wine of Tonio's choicest bin,
Strike down our tumblers, — shriek out shrill and long
The quavering fragment of that wicked song,
And let us hear your wild defiant laugh
Closing the final strophe of its sin.
Then shall the black vault echo to the din,
The benches leap, the lumbering tables spring,
The brass lucerna's rattling pendants swing,

The hanging lamp in quivering circles shake,
And o'er the ceiling whirl its gleaming ring,
Ay, and the framed Madonna, shuddering, quake.

Up, Zia Nica! hear you not the strain?
Once you could dance. Old Tonio, stand aside.
Push back the benches! make the circle wide!
The music rouses the old strength again.
Ay! when this Tonio took her for his bride,
Was there, of all the maids on hill or plain,
One that with this fierce mænad could compare?
More firm of waist, with such black eyes and hair?

Stand back! there 's danger in her eyes; for lo!
Upstarting with a sharp shriek from her seat,
With arms flung wide, and heavy shuffling feet,
Around the cleared space see her circling go.
Her trembling hands now twitching at her gown,
Now snapped aloft in air, — till, flushed with heat,
All reeking, panting, shaking, in her seat,
With open mouth, she drops, exhausted, down,
Crying — "Old Zia Nica 's not dead yet!"
To Zia Nica, then, your glasses drain!
And let the low room echo to the cry —
Eviva! and eviva! and again
Eviva! — may our Zia never die!

ROBA DI ROMA.

JULIETTA *appears above at a balcony.*

ROMÈO! Hist! Madonna, saints, and all!
How the man sleeps, stretched out beneath yon wall,
Deaf as the wall itself! I shall be missed
Before I make him hear. Romèo, hist!
Ah, well! Thank Heaven, I 've waked him up at last!
Quick, Mèo, catch this bottle I 've made fast
To this long cord! 'T is English wine, as strong
As aqua vitæ. Quick! don't be so long!
I found it in the pantry set away
For the great dinner that we give to-day.
And catch this package: there are candied pears
For your sweet tooth, and sugar cut in squares,
And other *bomboms*. Now, be off at once!
There, round the corner, — not that way, you dunce,
Or they will see you! — and come back at ten.
Who knows what I may find to give you then?
A rivederci caro, ah! va ben!

That dear old Mèo mine, — what luck it was
That through the pantry I should chance to pass

Just when old *Frangsaw* had slipped out a minute,
And no one near to see! The saints were in it!

Ah, well, he 's gone! I 'll draw the water now.
All 's silent yet; but won't there be a row
When *Frangsaw* comes and finds, instead of ten,
There are nine bottles only! Well, what then?
He can't accuse me. Let him, if he dares!
I 'll settle him, for all his mighty airs!

Perhaps 't was not quite right to take the wine;
But then the fault was his as well as mine.
Why should he leave it there exposed to sight,
To tempt whoever saw it? 'T was not right!
Does not the Lord's own catechism say
No one should lead us in temptation's way?
And they who do so are in part to blame;
As we forgive them, let them do the same.

Besides, next Sunday I 'll confess the whole
To Padre Giacomo, — the good old soul,
Old *omnia sæcula, amen*, — no doubt
He 'll set all right, and smooth the matter out.

And then, again, I say enough 's enough!
Why should these rich signori swill and stuff,
While we, who toil and slave our life away,
Must live upon their leavings? *Grazie.*
It is not fair! It is not fair, I say!

There are five grand signori come to dine,
And want ten bottles, and they 'll get but nine!
Dreadful to think of! How will they survive?
And how, then, on one bottle can we live?
I 'm sure we only take what they can spare;
No one could call that stealing!
Hark! Who 's there?
That Mèo's not come back again, I hope!
No; 't was the old goat tugging at his rope.
All 's safe, thank Heaven!
Madonna, what a row!
That 's *Frangsaw* — who has missed the bottle now —
Screaming for me, and swearing at them all.
Vengo! I am not deaf, — I heard you call.
What is the matter? Blessed saints! I say
I hear you, — any one could, miles away.
I 'm coming. Bottle? A black bottle? — Oh!
How in the name of mercy should I know?
I 've just come up to draw some water here.
Wine? I know nothing of your wine, *mounseer!*
It 's water that I 'm drawing. Wine of cost?
Ten bottles were there, and one bottle lost?
How should I know, indeed? How can I tell
Where it has gone to? I 'm here at the well
Drawing up water. Ten? Was it the wine
In those black bottles? Ten? There were but nine
When I last saw them. Oh, yes, that 's your way:

There 's not a thing you stupidly mislay
But some one stole it; 't is thief here, thief there,
When you 've missed anything. Why don't you swear
There were twelve bottles, — twenty! What is ten
In your outlandish lingo? Search me, then!
I steal your wine? I 've other work to do.
Thief, if there 's any one here thief, 't is you.

Who was it I was talking to below?
When? Nobody! I say there was n't. No!
Go look yourself, and see. You heard me say
Something to somebody? What was it, pray?
"*Pst! via!* quick, be off at once!" Oh, *that?*
That 's what you heard? You idiot! you flat!
Why, what I called to was the cat, — the cat!

NINA.

DEDICATED TO M. E. B.

How bright, how glad, how gay,
To thee, O Nina, dear!
Day after day slipped smooth away,
Through childhood's simple joy and simple fear.
Strained by no adverse force,
Life, like a clear and placid stream
In some delightful clime,
Bearing the sky within it like a dream,
And all the fair reflected shapes of time,
Flowed on its gentle course!
How many a time, oppressed with gloom,
While sitting in my lonely room,
And toiling at my task,
Neglected, humble, wan with care,
Aspiring, hoping, though I did not dare
Fate 's laurelled prize to ask,
Have I been gladdened by that voice of thine,
Singing, perhaps, some trivial song of mine,
And listened, and looked up, and felt a thrill
Come o'er my heart — as over waters still
A light breeze flutters — and almost forgot,
Hearing that happy voice, my wretched lot.

Years went; the round and rosy face
Grew fairer, paler; and as Childhood went,
Came Maidenhood's more tender grace
And thoughtful sentiment:
And when the first soft airs of Spring
Wooed the flowers forth, and with a subtle fire
Stirred in the human heart a vague desire
For what life cannot bring,
Often I watched you moving to and fro
The alleys of the garden-plot below,
Your white gown 'mid the roses fluttering;
And now you paused to train some wandering spray
With almost a caress,
And now you plucked some last year's leaf away
That marred its perfectness;
Or where the lilies of the valley grew,
Like them as modest, sweet, and pale of hue,
You bent to breathe their odour, or to give —
Almost it seemed as if they must receive
From you a sweeter odour than they knew.

Sometimes, as lingering there you walked along,
Humming half consciously some little song,
You paused, looked up, and saw me, mute and still,
Gazing upon you from my window-sill;
And with a voice, so glad and clear,
It rang like music on my ear —
You cried, "Antonio! look, Antonio, dear!"

Ah, happy memories!
They bring the burning tears into my eyes.
Oh, speak again, and say, "Antonio, dear!"
Ah, vanished voice! call to me once again!
Never! ah, never! in this world of pain,
No tone like thine my heart will ever thrill.

Oft when the spring its perfumed violets strewed
Along the greensward, 'neath the ilex wood
I strolled with you, how many an afternoon,
In the perfection of the early June —
Not owning to myself, as there we roved,
Not knowing, truly knowing, that I loved;
And all the while your pure young thought
So deeply in my inmost being wrought,
That it became a happy part of me —
And as it were a sweet necessity —
From which I wanted never to be free.

Yet never spoke I of my love; so slow,
  So gently in my heart it grew,
That when it fully came I scarcely know —
  Not bursting into rapture strange and new,
Splendour and perfume on the air to pour,
That from the sense was hidden in the bud
    A little hour before;
But slowly rising, like a tide to brim
  My being, widening ever more and more,
And deepening all my central life with dim
Unconscious fullness, till its joy ran o'er.

Then, when I knew at last,
How very dear thou wast,
I dared not trust my tongue to ease the load
Of love that lay upon my heart,
But lonely, silent, and apart,
Of you I dreamed — for you I hourly prayed —
Glad of my secret love, but how afraid!

'T was but a child's affection that you bore
For me — a placid feeling — nothing more.
Across your heart, so gentle and serene,
The burning thrill of love had never been;
And Childhood scarce had given place
To Maidenhood's more subtle grace,
When Death, who darkly steals along
Amid the gentle and the strong,
When least we fear to see his face,
Paused, gazed at you, and took you for his own,
And all the joy from out my life had flown —
And I was left of all bereft,
Too utterly alone.

Will earth again renew
That simple love for me? — ah, no!
Spring comes again — again the roses blow —
But you — ah, me! — not you!
Oh, Nina! in your grassy grave
I buried what can never grow again;
Life but one perfect joy can have —
That in thy grave is lain!

EVENING IN SUMMER.

Oh, love of mine, we sit beneath this tree,
We smile, and all is exquisite to see;
The moon, the earth, the heavens are all so fair, —
The very centre of the world are we.

And yet, 'neath all our happiness, there lie
Dim doubts and fears, for ever lurking nigh;
We are so happy now, one moment's space,
Then Love, and Life, and all take wing and fly.

Where shall we be a hundred years from now?
Where were we but a hundred years ago?
Behind, before, there hangs a solemn veil, —
What was, or shall be, neither do we know.

A passing gleam, called Life, is o'er us thrown,
Then swift we flit into the dark unknown;
As we have come we go, — no voice comes back
From that deep silence where we wend alone.

Stay! stay! oh, ever-fleeing Time, thy flight!
Make this one happy moment infinite;
Now, while we touch the heavens, and stand on earth,
And Love makes mystical all sound and sight.

No! the sad moon, so plaintive and so fair,
Hath seen how many here as now we are,
As happy in their perfectness of love, —
And seen, unmoved, as many in despair.

She will arise, and through the darkling trees
Gaze down, as now, through countless centuries,
While other lovers here shall breathe their vows,
When we have vanished like this passing breeze.

Oh, dreadful mystery! Thought beats its wings,
And strains against the utmost bound of things,
And drops exhausted back to earth again,
And moans, distressed by vague imaginings.

Each to himself, in all his hopes and dreams,
The very centre of creation seems;
And death and blank annihilation each
As some impossible vague terror deems.

Yet, of the countless myriads that have gone,
The countless myriads that are coming on,
Are all immortal? Ah! the thought recoils
From that vast crowd of living, and sinks down.

But what if all in all be now and here?
The rest, illusions shaped by hope or fear, —
And thou and I, with all our life and love,
End like this insect that is fluttering near?

If Virtue be a cheat, a child to soothe,
And Heaven a lie, invented but in ruth,
To hide the horror of eternal death, —
Knowing that madness would be born of Truth?

Who knows? who knows? Since God hath shut
the door
That opens out into the waste before,
Vainly we peep and pry, vainly we talk,
And vain is all our logic and our lore.

What will be, will be, though we laugh or weep;
Love is the happy dream of Life's brief sleep.
And we shall wake at last, and know — or else
In death's kind arms find slumber — dreamless
— deep.

Ah, love! what then is left to us but Trust
That somewhat in us shall survive our dust;
That heaven shall be at last — and life and love
Be purified of all earth's dregs and must?

Then let our life and thought no more be vext
By this dark problem — nor our hearts perplext
To solve the secret that torments us here; —
Love is earth's heaven — and we will wait the
next.

GIULIETTA.

DEDICATED TO G. W. C.

Ah, how still the moonbeams lie
  On the dreaming meadows!
How the fire-flies silently
  Lighten through the shadows!
All the cypress avenue
Waves its tops against the blue,
As the wind slides whispering through —
  He is late in coming!

There 's the nightingale again!
  He alone is waking;
Is it joy or is it pain
  That his heart is breaking?
Bliss intense or pain divine?
Both of them, oh Love, are thine!
And this heart, this heart of mine,
  With them both is thrilling.

From the deep dark orange-grove
  Odourous airs are streaming,
Till my thoughts are faint with love —
  Faint with blissful dreaming.
Through the slopes of dewy dells

Crickets shake their tiny bells,
And the sky's deep bosom swells
With an infinite yearning.

On my heart the silent weight
Of this beauty presses;
Midnight, like a solemn Fate,
Saddens while it blesses.
All alone I cannot bear
This still night and odourous air,
Dearest, come, its bliss to share,
Or I die with longing.

I have listened at the doors,
All are calmly sleeping;
I alone for hours and hours
In the dark am weeping.
Only weeping can express
The mysterious deep excess
Of my very happiness,
Therefore I am weeping.

Like a fountain running o'er
With its too great fulness,
Like a lightning-shivered shower
For the fierce noon's coolness,
Like an over-blossomed tree,
That the breeze shakes tenderly,
Love's excess falls off from me
In these tears of gladness.

Ah, beloved! there you are!
I once more am near you;
Walk not on the gravel there,
Somebody may hear you.
Step upon the noiseless grass;
Oh! if they should hear you pass
We are lost, alas! alas!
We are lost forever!

Look! the laurels in the light
Seem with eyes to glisten;
All things peep and peer — and night
Holds its breath to listen.
Deeper in the shadow move,
For the moon looks out above,
I am coming to you, love,
In a moment coming.

THE CHIFFONIER.

I AM a poor Chiffonier!
I seek what others cast away!
In refuse-heaps the world throws by,
Despised of man, my trade I ply;
And oft I rake them o'er and o'er,
And fragments broken, stained, and torn,
I gather up, and make my store
Of things that dogs and beggars scorn.
I am the poor Chiffonier!

You see me in the dead of night
Peering along with pick and light,
And while the world in darkness sleeps,
Waking to rake its refuse-heaps;
I scare the dogs that round them prowl,
And light amid the rubbish throw,
For precious things are hid by foul
Where least we heed and least we know.
I am the poor Chiffonier!

No wretched and rejected pile,
No tainted mound of offal vile,
No drain or gutter I despise,
For there may lie the richest prize

And oft amid the litter thrown,
A silver coin — a golden ring
Which holdeth still its precious stone,
Some happy chance to me may bring.
I am the poor Chiffonier!

These tattered rags, so soiled and frayed,
Were in a loom of wonder made,
And beautiful and free from shame
When from the master's hand they came.
The reckless world that threw them off
Now heeds them only to despise;
Yet, ah! despite its jeers and scoff,
What virtue still within them lies!
I am the poor Chiffonier!

Yes! all these shreds so spoiled and torn,
These ruined rags you pass in scorn,
This refuse by the highway tost,
I seek that they may not be lost;
And, cleansed from filth that on them lies,
And purified and purged from stain,
Renewed in beauty they shall rise
To wear a spotless form again.
I am the poor Chiffonier!

AN ESTRANGEMENT.

How is it? It seems so strange;
Only a month ago
We were such friends; now there 's a change;
Why, I scarcely know;
I thought we were friends enough to say,
"We differ in this or the other way,
What matter?" It was not so.

I know not the how or why,
I only feel the fact;
Something hath happened to set us awry,
Something is sadly lacked, —
Something that used to be before, —
It seems to be nothing, I feel it the more;
Our vase is not broken, but cracked.

Friends? Oh, yes, we are friends;
The words we say are the same,
But there is not the something that lends
The grace, though it has no name.
When others are with us we feel it less;
When alone, there 's a sort of irksomeness,
And nobody to blame.

I wish I could say, " Dear friend,
Tell me, what have I done?
Forgive me ; let it be now at an end."
But ah ! we scarcely own
That aught has happened — or something so slight
'T is ghostlike, it will not bear the light, —
'T is only a change of tone.

Suppose I should venture to say :
" Something, — oh ! tell me what —
Troubles the heart's free play
That once existed not."
All would be worse ; — we must turn our back ;
Pretend not to see that there *is* a crack
In our vase, on our love a blot.

Once were it openly said,
It would strike us more apart.
Each, alas ! would know that there laid
A stone at the other's heart.
But now we carry it each alone,
So we must hope to live it down,
Each one playing his part.

It is not that I express
Less, but a little more,
A little more accent, a little more stress,
Which was not needed before.
Ah ! would I could feel entirely sure
That it was not so — I should be truer,
If you were just as of yore.

But I cannot give you up.
Ah! no, I am all to blame;
You were so kind, you filled my cup
With love, — and mine is the shame;
'T was some stupid, foolish word I said
Unwitting, I know, that must have bred
This something without a name.

Was it not all a mistake?
Oh! porcelain friendship so thin,
It is so apt, so apt to break
And let out the wine from within;
But once it is injured the least, alack!
What hand so skilful to mend the crack,
And make it all whole again.

THE BEGGAR.

I AM but a beggar,
A wretch and an outcast;
No health in my body,
No joy in my spirit;
Despised and neglected,
Lame, crooked, and wretched,
I crawl at thy gateway
To wait for thy coming,
For I love thee, my glory,
My life, my beloved!

I wait for thy coming
All night at thy portals,
In my rags I await thee,
In sorrow and longing.
I watch the lights shining
And moving above me,
And my heart goes up to thee
In loving and longing,
For I love thee, my gladness,
My hope, my beloved!

I wait till thy portals
Swing wide in the morning,

And thou with thy splendors
Before us appearest
Desiring, yet fearing,
The sword of thy glances ;
For how shall the outcast
Dare gaze at thy glory ;
Yet I love thee, my gladness,
My life, my beloved !

What have I to give thee
That thou shouldst accept me ?
How dare I to hope, then,
That thou wilt not spurn me?
No goodness — no beauty
Is mine — and no riches,
But a human heart only
That praises and trembles;
For I love thee, my gladness,
My life, my salvation !

With the wretched I wander,
My life is uncleanly,
I yield to temptation,
And drink at the tavern ;
Yet in the still foot-paths
Of thought I adore thee,
In the filth of my vices
I kneel down to praise thee;
For I love thee, my gladness,
My life, my salvation !

Each law of thy kingdom
I 've wilfully broken ;
Without, I am abject,
Within, I am loathsome ;
I ask not for justice,
For that would destroy me ;
I cry for forgiveness,
Oh ! save and forgive me ;
For I love thee, and fear thee,
My life, my salvation !

THE MANDOLINATA.

The night is still, the windows are open,
The air with odours is sweet;
Hark! some one is humming the Mandolinata
Along the open street.
The Mandolinata! Ah me! as I hear it,
Before me you seem to rise
From the other world, with your gentle presence,
Your tender and smiling eyes.

How we jested together, and hummed together
That old and threadbare song,
With forced intonations and quaint affectations,
That ended in laughter long!
How oft in the morning beneath your window
I framed to it bantering words,
And heard from within your sweet voice answer
With a flute-tone like a bird's!

And you opened your shutters and sang, "Good
morning,
O Troubadour, gallant and gay!"
And I chanted, "O lovely and lazy lady,
I die of this long delay!
Oh, hasten, hasten!" "I 'm coming, I 'm coming,
Thy lady is coming to thee;"

And then you drew back in your chamber laughing —
Oh, who were so foolish as we?

Ah me! that vision comes up before me;
How vivid and young and gay!
Ere Death like a sudden blast blew on you,
And swept life's blossoms away.
Buoyant of spirit, and glad and happy,
And gentle of thought and heart;
Ah! who would believe you were mortally wounded,
So bravely you played your part?

We veiled our fears and our apprehensions,
With hopes that were all in vain;
It was only a sudden cough and spasm
Betrayed the inward pain.
In the midst of our jesting and merry laughter,
We turned aside to sigh,
Looked out of the window, and all the landscape
Grew dim to the brimming eye.

And at last, one pleasant summer morning
When roses were all in bloom,
Death gently came with the wandering breezes
To bear your spirit home.
A smile on your lips — a tender greeting —
And all that was once so gay
Was still and calm, with a perfect sadness,
And you had passed away.

THE EMPTY HALL.

THROUGH the casement the wind is moaning,
On the pane the ivy crawls,
The fire is faded to ashes,
And the black brand, broken, falls.

The voices are gone, but I linger,
And silence is over all;
Where once there was music and laughter
Stands Death in the empty hall.

There is only a dead rose lying,
Faded and crushed on the floor;
And a harp whose strings are broken,
That Love will play no more.

THE DESOLATION OF JERUSALEM.

THEY have crushed my pride! They have trampled me down in the dust!
Whither, O God, shall I flee?
To whom shall I turn? — in whom shall I put my trust?
In whom, O Jehovah, but Thee?

For Famine and Pestilence enter through all my gates,
And dark Death stalks in the street,
And Murder at every corner skulks and waits,
And Justice has bloody feet!

Thou hast trodden me down, and all I have loved is fled;
I have moaned till my soul is sore,
I have wept till my eyes are coals, and my heart is dead;
'T is useless to crush me more.

They have plucked the babe from my breast; the child in his play,
While he laughed, they have stricken down;

The grace of woman, and manhood's strength, and stay —
And age with its hoary crown.

I have sinned — I deserve my Fate — yet hear me, O Lord!
Oh forgive them not who have set
Their feet on our necks, and Thy name and Thy law abhorred —
Whose hands with our blood are wet.

Do unto them, O God, as they unto me and mine!
Crush them, and beat them down,
Like a tempest that swoops o'er the corn, and flays the vine
With its darkening thunder-frown.

Mercy I do not demand for myself — and for them
No mercy — but justice, O Lord!
Let Thy swift sharp vengeance destroy them root and stem
With the lightning of its sword.

I have sinned! I have sinned! Jehovah, Thou hidest Thy face;
But, prostrate here in the dust,
I adore Thee, the Holy One. Lift me in my disgrace,
Oh help me! in Thee I trust.

The floods have all gone over me; nothing now
Can torture me more or worse;
Thy thunder hath crushed me flat, and Thine awful brow
Hath frowned, and I feel Thy curse.

Not humbled by them, but quivering under the weight
Of Thy tremendous hand;
But Thou who hast punished wilt pardon! Thy pity is great!
Oh raise up this desolate land!

I can wait, I can suffer, O Lord, for Thy law is just,
Though terrible is Thy wrath;
But this people is Thine, O Lord; in Thy promise they trust,
To guide them and show them the path.

Thou shalt lift them at last when the debt of their sins is paid,
All paid to the uttermost groat;
And the balance shall turn in which their sins have been weighed,
And the collar be loosed from their throat.

Years shall go by. They shall creep, they shall cringe, they shall crawl,
Abject in the eyes of men;

Loved by none, feared by few, but scorned and derided by all —
And then, O Jehovah, and then

Thy voice shall be heard, — "Ye have drunk of the bitter cup,
Ye have drained it and drunk it down;
Come back, O my people, come back; I will lift you up,
And place on your heads the crown.

"And joy shall again be yours, and triumph shall peal
And ring through your laughing ways;
And your strength shall be mine, and your battle be mine, and your steel,
And your glory be mine, and your praise."

AN ENGLISH HUSBAND TO HIS ITALIAN WIFE.

WHAT a constant jealousy gnaws your heart!
It tires me out; day after day
Some little worry from nothing you start —
Something is hidden in what I say,
Something is hidden in what I do;
That heart of yours is never still,
It cannot be sure that I am true,
But spies and pries about for ill.

Frankly I speak the whole of my mind
Once for all — let it serve or not:
I am not one of that showy kind,
Fair outside with an inward rot.
I love you! will not that suffice?
No! I must say it again and again,
And embroider it over with flatteries,
Or all I have said and done is vain.

Trust me! trust my simple love!
If you suspect me, that love will die.
I cannot bear to be forced to prove
Every moment its honesty.
Ah! you say, I 'm so still and cold!

Well! I cannot be other than what I am;
I cannot squander my lump of gold
As I could a little tinsel sham.

You your jewels must always wear;
What is their use if they are not shown?
I keep mine with a miser's care
And love to count them over alone.
I cannot abide that the world should observe.
What it thinks is nothing to me;
I was born with a sense of reserve
That is shocked by love's publicity.

You have a richer heart, if you will,
That scatters about its wide largess;
Your love a keeping like mine would kill, —
All that you feel you must express.
Your love seeks for the light and sun,
And gives its perfume to every breeze;
The bees get its honey — every one —
Its beauty whoever passes sees.

Mine, like a well, is still and deep:
Cold, you say it is, like a well;
But though like a brook it will not leap
And joy forever one tale to tell,
It still is real; and when the year
Hath silenced the brook with its shallow laugh
The well's cool waters will still be clear,
Where those who trusted may surely quaff.

I cannot, like Sarto, publish your face
In every Madonna, Sibyl, and Saint,
Or praise to the world your beauty and grace
In a thousand sonnets sweet and faint.
But this is the head's work more than the heart's:
Skill and genius they show, no doubt;
But the painter and poet may give to their Arts
What they leave their lady, perhaps, without.

Trust me, dear, with your eyes so black
And full of passion, — these eyes of blue,
Though your excess of expression they lack,
Are not the less sincere and true.
I cannot fondle you every hour
With many a pretty and gallant phrase,
Rain out my love as a cloud its shower, —
But trust me, and leave me my English ways.

BLACK EYES.

Those black eyes I once so praised
  Now are hard and sharp and cold;
Where 's the love that through them blazed?
  Where 's the tenderness of old?
All is gone — how utterly —
  From its stem the flower has dropped.
Ah! how ugly Life can be
  After Love from it is lopped!

Do we hate each other now,
  While we call each other dear?
On that faultless mouth and brow
  To the world does change appear?
No! your smile is just as sweet,
  Just as fair your outward grace;
But I look in vain to greet
  The dear ghost behind the face.

That is gone! I look on you
  As a corpse from which has fled
All that once I loved and knew,
  All that once I thought to wed.
'T is not your fault, 't is not mine;
  Yet I still recall a dream

Of a joy almost divine —
'T was an image in a stream.

Nothing can be sour and sharp
As a love that has decayed —
On the loose strings of the harp
Only discord can be made.
Cold this common friendship seems
After love's auroral glow;
On the broken stem of dreams
Only disappointments grow.

Do I hate you? No! Not hate?
Hate 's a word far too intense,
Too alive, to speak a state
Of supreme indifference.
Once, behind your eyes I thought
Worlds of love and life to see;
Now I see behind them nought
But a soulless vacancy.

Out and out I know you now;
There 's no issue of your heart
Where my soul with you may go
To a beauty all apart,
Where the world can never come.
'T is a little narrow place —
Friendship there might find a home;
Love would die — for want of space.

So we live! The world still says,
"What expression in her eyes!
What sweet manners — graceful ways!"
How it would the world surprise
If I said, "This woman's soul
Made for love you think, but try;
Plunge therein — how clear and shoal! —
You might drown there — so can't I?"

ARTEMIS.

A SLENDER shape of graceful mien,
With spirit tenderly serene
O'er which had never passed a storm;
In feeling pure, in impulse warm:
A face informed with serious light,
Too peaceful to be gayly bright,
Too young to know of pain and care,
Too slight their wearing weight to bear,
She passed before my dreaming eyes
When in the paling western skies
The young moon trembling strove to hide
Within the clear sky's luminous tide.

Again to full expansion grown
We met when maidenhood had flown —
A noble sweetness lit her eyes,
Her look was calm as destiny's.
Pure, serious, grandly self-possessed,
Her passions rounded into rest,
She stood — and far above I saw
The full-orbed moon without a flaw
Walk through the chambers of the night
And comfort all the world with light.

Again, when youth and health had gone
I saw her pallid cheek and wan.
Life scarcely seemed to linger there
So visionary was her air,
And sweeter than all words can tell
The smile that ever said, "Farewell!"
Within her saintliness of mood
All joy, all passion was subdued,
And as she passed, far overhead
The morning twilight 'gan to spread,
While thin and white before the day
The waning moon paled fast away.

NINA AND HER TREASURES.

Life, since you left me, love, has been but a
trouble and pain,
I am always longing and praying to see your
dear face again.

Fate has been cruel and hard, and so many tears
I have shed;
The heart is an empty nest for the rain, when
love has fled.

I am weary, so weary, of life, and the bitterest
pang of all
Is to lie and think of the past, that nothing can
ever recall;

To lie in the dark, and think and sob to myself
alone,
Quietly, lest I should waken and grieve mamma
with my moan.

Sometimes I stretch myself out, and think, as I
lie on my bed,
Thus it will be with me, when I 'm laid out stiff
and dead.

Stay not away, O Death! Come soon and give
me my rest,
With the calm lids over my eyes and my arms
crossed over my breast.

Then perhaps he will come, and, gazing upon
me, say,
Nina was good, and our love was an hour of a
summer's day.

Ah, yes, a day that the clouds overcast, ere the
morning was done,
And whose noon was a dreary rain, with never a
glimpse of sun.

If he should stoop and kiss my lips, oh, if I
were dead,
I think I should start to life, and rise up in my
bed.

But what is the use of thinking, with all this
work to do?
Oh, yes, mamma, I hear you; I'll come in a
moment to you.

What am I doing? Nothing. I'm putting
some things away;
No, — not the trinkets of Gigi. (Madonna, for-
give me, I pray!)

Oh, no; you never will throw them into the river, I know.
Just wait till I find my needle, and then I 'll come in and sew.

Oh, this is the hardest of all, — to smile and to chatter lies,
While my heart is breaking and tears blind everything to my eyes.

When will there come an end, Madonna mia, — I say,
When will there come an end, and the whole world pass away?

NEMESIS.

DEDICATED TO E. B. H.

Oppressed by pain, by grief subdued,
I closed at night my weary eyes,
When, in the dubious twilight dim
Betwixt reality and dream,
The awful shape of Nemesis —
The absolute — before me stood.

Her hands within her robes involved,
And folded square upon her breast,
Immovable, in perfect rest,
From sight of human eyes concealed
The dread decree of Fate she held,
By time and death to be resolved.

Severe was she in mood and mien,
Like one who never saw surprise;
Who, deaf alike to love or hate,
Or joy or fear, impassionate
Decreed the doom — decreed the prize —
Inexorable, yet serene.

"Oh! what hast thou for me in store
This side the shadow of the tomb?
Pronounce!" I cried, "or what shall be
The stern decree of destiny
When life and death alike are o'er?"

"Time is of destiny the womb,"
She answered. "Seek not to explore
What the eternal powers above
Conceal, in pity and in love,
Behind the Future's darkened door.

"Content within the present live!
Do the great duty of to-day!
Minute by minute the gods give,
Each unto each for man to lay —
Not to be scorned — nor thrown away.

"With love and justice build them close
By strenuous act and earnest will!
Nor let your wandering wishes loose
To anxious hopes or fears of ill —
So will you best time's task fulfil!

"Pile not with vain regrets the grave
Of the irrevocable past!
Seize opportunity — enslave
The living moments while they last!
For Fortune meets half-way the brave."

She ceased ; and starting from my sleep,
I heard the roaring thunder, thrown
Far down from mountain steep to steep,
And dying in a distant groan, —
And waking, found myself alone.

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